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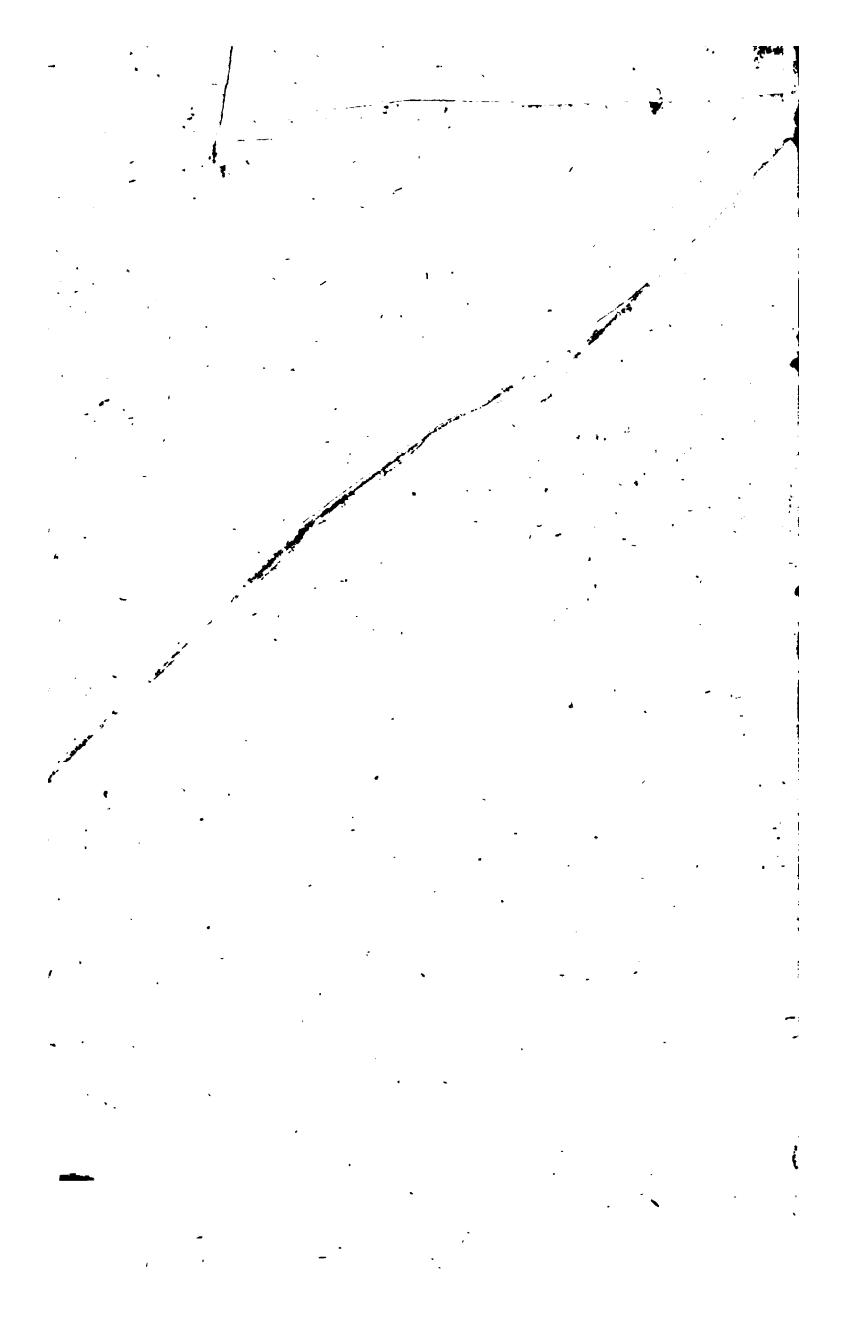


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M E M O I R S

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M A R Y,

A

N O V E L.

By *Mrs.* G U N N I N G,



IN FIVE VOLUMES.

V O L. II.

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MEMOIRS

OF

M A R Y.

Miss Montague's Journal continued.

Jan. 22.—Morning.

WHEN I got to my own room last night, I sat down, as is my custom, to add a few lines to my journal, but it was so late before the company separated, my eyes were so heavy, and my bed looked so invitingly, that indolence got the better of inclination, and I resigned my paper to

VOL. II.

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the

the port-folio, my pen to the standish, and my head to the pillow, confiding to the strength of my memory till this morning for the events of yesterday.

Just as we were going to the Opera, a sealed note was brought to the Duchess—From Lord Auberry, said she, hastily running over the contents, and then throwing it on the table—he is going out of town, and cannot come to me on either of my nights.—Heaven be praised! I softly whispered, not conscious that there was any body who could possibly over-hear me, when a voice immediately answered from behind me—How graceful is the homage of praise from the divine lips of Miss Montague! I looked suddenly round, and who should be standing at the back of my chair but Mr Lexington?—I thought I should have died with confusion; it was not like his usual politeness to surprise one in such a manner; I did not tell him he had made me angry, but he has great penetration, and I believe he found it out, for he often
looked

looked at me as if he was asking my pardon, and was not in spirits again the whole night.

My second excursion to the Opera was more pleasant than the first; I saw nothing of the two ladies who stared at me so confidently the last time I was there. We had Sir Ashton Montague in our box; I thought him a great deal more agreeable than when he dined with us; he was quite as lively as any one of the party, talked very much to me, and did not talk to me of Lord Auberry, which made me listen to and answer him without embarrassment;—but if ever I saw Lord Auberry in my life, I saw him this evening. I observed my relation and name-sake often look towards a particular corner in the upper boxes; there is a sympathy in eyes, I believe, because our own mechanically follow the lead of others; I can assign no other cause why I should turn my head the same way, as if to search out the object that attracted him; I had no motive for doing so, but a

strong reason why I did not repeat my folly, for on looking up, I saw Lord Auberry, and he saw me, for he drew back immediately, and yet, from what passed afterwards, I can hardly credit my senses. The Duchess, who heard Sir Ashton the other day, when he dined in Grosvenor-square, talk to me of Lord Auberry, supposed they must be friends, and asked Sir Ashton, what in the name of absurdity could carry his Lordship out of town, when all the world were crowding into it?—then added, pray tell him, if you please, that neither Miss Montague or I are satisfied with his written excuses, and shall not be friends with him till he makes them to us in person.

What were my feelings! I cannot describe them;—however, I had presence of mind enough to request Sir Ashton, that when he delivered her Grace's message, he would have the goodness to leave my name out of it, for that I really had neither so much impatience or curiosity to see his
Lordship,

Lordship, as would justify my expressing any displeasure towards him.

Aye, replied her Grace, you do not know this cousin of your's, Sir Ashton, she is the veriest little prude in nature ; and would, I am sure, live altogether without the society of mankind, rather than send to invite them.

He said something very obliging in my favour, to which she answered, Yes, yes, the heart is right, it is only the education that has been wrong ;—her Grace then asked more questions about Lord Auberry, particularly when he meant to leave London, and when to come back to it.

After having seen him the moment before, the reply he made her astonished me, for he said Lord Auberry had left Town that morning, and had fixed no time for his return !—have I or have I not seen him ? that is the question.

Dressing Time.

Would you believe it possible? there are no less than sixteen cards of invitations come in this morning; five for balls, one a masquerade, and the rest assemblies;—they are all for very distant days, and I shall say nothing more about them in this place.

We have been at two auctions, made three visits, and drove through both Parks since breakfast;—the Duchess is in high good humour, speaks handsomely of Lady Jane, longs to see Miss Fortescue, who, Mr. Lexington has told her, is very handsome, praises Miss Beaulieu, finds fault with Mrs. Oxburn, ridicules Lady Elizabeth, laughs at Mrs. Tovee, and says I am a charming creature.

From

*From my own Fire-side.—
Two in the Morning.*

Do you not tremble, dear grand-mamma, for the health and morals of your Mary, when you look on the last of my dates, from day to day, and consider how different are the present hours to those I used to keep at Riverdale? and yet I hope there is no real cause for your apprehensions on either of these scores, whilst my colour remains unfaded, my appetite unfailling, and my sleep unbroken;—and whilst I continue to say, when surrounded with objects the most brilliant, and the most seducing, “I would renounce ye all, and for ever, for sober happiness, and the presence of a beloved parent,” I shall not fear a decline of constitution or principles.

I have not passed so pleasant a day as this has been since, I first landed on the

island of vanity;—of all our usual dinner party, there has dined with us only Mr. Lexington and his two sisters; Lady Jane Petworth, the two young ladies of her family, the Duchefs of Northington, who arrived in town last night, and her daughter Lady Araminta Boice, completed the agreeable circle;—our two Duchesses, that is to say, my Duchefs, and her Grace of Northington, have been intimate from childhood, and are seldom asunder during the months of dissipation.—I was introduced to these strangers under so fortunate a patronage, that they have both done me the honor to assure me of their friendship.—The Duchefs of Northington has a round, open, good-humoured countenance, seldom speaks without laughing, and never laughs without being accompanied;—she is a promoter of every thing that is called pleasure, and had rather you should love her as the parent of mirth, than pay her homage as the wife of a Duke;—Lady Araminta is unlike her
mother

mother in every thing, yet I think her equally agreeable, and admire them both exceedingly.

In the evening our numbers were reinforced by the dropping in of Mrs. Oxburn and a train of gentlemen in her suite, whom she had brought with her from the play;—her Grace of Northington proposed that all the company under fifty years of age should dance, whilst those above it might draw their amusement from the board of green cloth.—Fiddlers were enquired for amongst the servants, but not finding any, she sent away for two of her own, and in twenty minutes we were summoned to an adjoining room by the cheerful sound, not only of a violin, but pipe and tabor;—the gentlemen started from their chairs, and each of them asking the lady who sat next to him if she was under fifty, led her off as his partner;—my nearest neighbour happened to be Mr. Lexington, who, taking my hand, said he would not trouble me with enquiries, he was no enemy to

age, had in some cases a predilection in its favor—and, if I had arrived to the honors of a hundred, I should still be the object of his election.

Just as we reached the door of the room to which we were all crowding as fast as we could, with each a partner at her side, except only Mrs. Oxburn, Lord Silvester was announced, and, transported at the sound of a fiddle, flew to me, blessing himself, that he came in time to claim the performance of my promise.

What promise? sternly demanded my conductor.

Oh! you pretend to forget, Lexington, that I am to have the supreme felicity of Miss Montague's hand the two first dances, when and wherever we should meet on such an occasion as this.

There can be no pretence, my Lord, when Miss Montague is the subject of contention;—I have not forgot that you asked her for the first ball, but this is an accidental affair, and, in the absence of
your

your Lordship, I have taken the very great liberty, without consulting you, to ask and obtain that honor for myself; which, if Lord Silvester is inclined to dispute, it must be when I am less agreeably engaged than at present. He then led me to my place in the set, which was already arranged, and I had soon the satisfaction of seeing it augmented by Mrs. Oxburn and his Lordship, who did not seem abundantly pleased with each other; her predilection for my partner has been pretty clearly evinced before this evening,—and, the first dances being over, she made the bold proposal of herself for the two second, and Lord Silvester again made his demands on me with more success than before.—This is enough scribbling for one sitting.

Jan. 23.

I have passed the whole of this day, if not so gaily as yesterday, yet infinitely more to my satisfaction; Lady Jane Petworth has such a fund of wisdom, so much the power of entertaining,—she is so pious, so gentle, so condescending, so like in every thing to the dearest and most revered of parents, that whenever I am with her I am no longer absent from you.

She asked the Duchess last night if she might call for me, as she did last Sunday; and receiving a gracious assent, went one step further; it was for leave to keep me with her to dinner; adding, she would herself set me down in Grosvenor-square, after an early supper:—this also was granted, and the more readily, as she was going out with her newly arrived friend the Duchess of Northington, to several assemblies, where I could be of no use to her.

De-

Delighted not to receive one negative to her several petitions, and determined to have enough of me, the dear woman came herself to fetch me before she had breakfasted, and before the young ladies were ready to attend her.—Oh ! how I long to repose all my thoughts in her bosom !—I was twenty times going to speak to her of Lord Auberry, but the shortness of our drive, or something else, deterred me ; for well as I love Miss Beaulieu, I could not trust any body in the world but Lady Jane with the slights and insults he has thought fit to mark me with, after the most solemn protestations made in your presence, and sanctioned by your acceptance ; I wonder if I shall ever have courage to tell Lady Jane, when I get her quite alone ;—it is not that I am afraid she will reprove me, as you have not condemned me,—of self reproaches I have none, and will most certainly avoid them ;—but then it is so odd to be one's own historian, so humiliating for a young creature like me to have already encountered

events

events far from being common ones,—these events still so perfectly unaccountable to myself, that I do not know how to set about reposing my confidence even with Lady Jane.—I have done with Lord Auberry;—yet what a mystery does he still preserve!—how unreasonable is his conduct!—he disguises himself to prevent my knowing his person, yet tells me in his own undisguised voice, that he has claims on me which he never will renounce!—Dear grand-mamma, has this inconsistent man claims on your Mary?—No! he has no claims; if you once permitted me to think he had, he has since that time forfeited them for ever.

In our way to Bruton-street, Lady Jane told me a few of her most intimate friends would dine with her, who longed to see me; they all visit, added she, in Grosvenor-square, but not in that easy way in which the Dukes of Cleveland's particular favorites are admitted; half-a-dozen names left at the door in the course of a winter,
and

and as many returned by her Grace, keeps up the acquaintance ; they seldom go to her assemblies,—but after seeing you, I shall be mistaken if you have not some of them to entertain to-morrow evening.

One of these ladies of whom I am speaking, continued Lady Jane, is the dowager of an Earl, the other is the wife of a Viscount.

Lady Felton has been a widow twenty years, yet is neither old or ugly. She has two sons, whom she considers as her friends, her lovers, and her husbands,—and they make her large returns of confidence, duty, and affection.

Lady Busby is a very fine lady, and at the same time a very worthy woman; she misses few occasions of seeing and being seen; is the most showy and expensive in her entertainments of any body I know. Her lord has an equal passion for magnificence, and a princely fortune to support it ;—but if their rage for grandeur is bounded only by prudence, I must also

also declare, their liberality and charity have no bounds at all. Lady Busby is still more remarkable on another account: she would wish to live in habits of friendship with all the world—but then it must be a new creation; no woman, married or single, whose reputation is not as immaculate as her own, would ever be found in her circle, if she could devise any method to keep them out of it:—As it is, they do not come by her invitation, but contrive to get in by the interest of others, who are more proper than themselves, and less exact than Lady Busby. For this reason, she will never go farther than appearances with any family where she is liable to mix, and that very frequently, with fashionable ladies of a certain description, who may either force themselves or be forced upon her acquaintance.—She has four daughters; only two of them are yet come out, and I cannot say I know quite as much of them as I do of their mother.

After

After we came from church, Lady Jane was set down at home, and left Miss Beau-lieu, Miss Fortescue, and myself, to do as we pleased with our time till four o'clock, and would then expect our assistance to receive and entertain her dinner company.

When I was in the Park last Sunday, from the throng of coaches fauntering down the drive, impeding the passage, and hitching in the wheels of each other, it struck me, that certainly the air of Hyde-Park must be the purest and most salutary of any other in the world;—or why would such numbers, many of whom I observed were invalids, run the risk of frights and overturns at every step, merely to imbibe it?—I therefore named the Park, when my two companions obligingly put themselves under my direction.

About the middle of Piccadilly, there passed by, as swift as thought, in a phaëton drawn, or rather whirled, by four small horses, Lord Auberry and Sir Ashton Montague. They did not know Lady
Jane's

Jane's liveries, or, I dare say, we should not have escaped their observation, as curiosity to look at the pretty equipage had made me drop the side-glass, and extend my neck even beyond it; but on seeing who it was, I drew back, and resigned my station to the other ladies, who were as eager as myself to catch a glimpse of it in its flight.

And this is his going out of town! How degrading is falsehood! How shocking a vice is duplicity!—Lord Auberry himself only could have taken the bandage from my eyes, and I shall thank him as long as I live for doing me so great a service. I blush for Sir Ashton Montague:—I am shocked that a man, who bears the name of my father, should condescend to propagate untruths, either to save himself, or serve his friend;—there is no possible excuse for a breach of veracity.

I believe they went out at the turnpike, for we saw nothing of them in the Park—indeed we were so early, that there was not
another

another carriage there but our own, which made us agree to extend our drive; and at our return it was so crowded, that I thought we never should get into the streets again. . Thus ends my morning adventures.

Lady Jane's friends exactly answered the description she had given me of them, in our way from Grosvenor-square, only that I did not expect to find, after twenty years of widowhood, the appearance of youth, and a considerable share of beauty, in the countenance of Lady Felton—and should certainly have mistaken her for one of Lady Busby's grown-up daughters, had I not been presented to her before I was introduced to the other family. I can tell you that I love Miss Beaulieu—that I admire Miss Fortescue; but I cannot tell you how I like the Miss Busbies, or whether I like them at all.

Lord Felton is about seven-and-twenty—his brother, Mr. Arnold, not more than twenty-two; the former has a sedateness
in

in his manner, bordering on melancholy—he does not speak much, but appears very gentle, very good humoured, exceedingly fond of his mother, and attentive to every body. I fancy there is a very good understanding between him and the elder Miss Busby—indeed I did not make the discovery by any particular marks of attachment on his part, but had several hints of it from the lady herself, who took some pains to get me into a corner, to know my opinion of his Lordship; and, at the same time, gave me reason to believe she was more than commonly interested in the enquiries—and that with the approbation of both their families. I own I was rather surpris'd at this proof of confidence on so short an acquaintance—but I suppose it is the fashion.

Mr. Arnold is much more lively, and, I dare say, ninety out of a hundred would call him more agreeable than his brother; but I do not think he is one half so interesting.

resting. The Countess and Viscountess were exceedingly good to me—and honoured me with several distinguishing marks of their approbation. I am to see them to-morrow, at the Duchefs of Cleveland's assembly—the next night we are all to meet again at Lady Elderton's—and the day following Miss Beaulieu will be on her road to Riversdale, carrying with her the thoughts, the wishes, the very heart of your Mary, which she will lay at your feet;—how much rather would I, in person, convey them to you!

I have yet a little more to add, before I close my account of this day—and shall continue to lengthen my journal to the last moment. I am to seal it up on Tuesday night, and to leave it with Jenny, who is to deliver it to Miss Beaulieu's servant, when she sends for it on Wednesday morning, which will, probably, be before my eyes are open.

After we had dined, Lord Felton and Mr. Arnold excused themselves to Lady

Jane for an hour, in consequence of a note, brought to them whilst they were at table. It had been left at their house, and was from an old college acquaintance, his Lordship said, who was passing through London, and desired, if it were possible, he might see them before eight o'clock—as by that time he should be again on his journey.

As soon as they had obtained her Ladyship's permission, and assured her, with some oblique compliments, which seemed general, but which, I fancy, were really intended only for the Miss Busbies, that their absence would not be a long one, we all adjourned into the drawing-room.

Lady Jane, who knows how much I exult, and what consequential joy it gives me, when you are made the subject of conversation, began speaking of Miss Beaulieu's intended excursion to Riverdale. Oh! what encomiums follow the name of Lady Auberry! and how proud is your Mary, when she says, Am not I the
grand-

grand-daughter, the beloved grand-daughter of this exalted Lady Auberry? the delightful topic led to another, that was far, very far, from giving me self-importance, or matter of self-congratulation.

Ah! said Lady Busby, I do not expect the world will ever meet with a second Countess of Auberry like your grandmother, Miss Montague! I dare say, when the present Earl marries, it will be to some woman or other as dissipated and as good for nothing as himself; but perhaps I am delivering my sentiments too freely—if so, you will have good-nature enough to pardon me—for though I know he must be your relation, however distant, yet I think he cannot have the honour of your acquaintance, because it is no secret that the present and late family are not, or ever have been, well together. I know his mother and sister, and can venture to say, the good opinion of Mrs. and Miss Pleydell would not be an acquisition to any body. Nothing can be so obscure as her birth, except

cept the meanness and low cunning of her conduct; she is the only person who ever spoke of Lady Auberry without veneration, and she is never tired of abusing her; if such a circumstance was possible to happen, she would always find a strong reinforcement in the talents of her daughter.

I replied, I had never seen either of them; and after what her Ladyship condescended to inform me of, I would go an hundred miles to avoid them. Lady Jane then asked me, If I was as much a stranger to Lord Auberry as to his mother and sister? I said, No—on the contrary, I knew him very well before he went abroad.—Then you have not seen him since he returned? continued she.—I was neither confused or agitated; the name of Lord Auberry has ceased to give me pleasure, or afflict me with pain—and I answered, calmly, that I had seen him accidentally more than once, but I had no ambition of being recognized by his Lordship.

You

You are perfectly right, my dear, rejoined Lady Buiby, who seems to have taken a great kindness for me; you discriminate with judgment:—I heard but little of Lord Auberry before he left England—he might then have deserved to be the acknowledged acquaintance of the decent part of our sex—but he did not maintain that character on the Continent, which may entitle him to a renewal of it on his return. When abroad, he seduced the wife of his friend, a woman of rank.—I had the misfortune to rate her high in my esteem, on meeting with her some years ago in Italy; she was then married, and I thought her a pattern of modesty, propriety, and decorum, very superior to most of her country-women.—There is now a foreigner living in London, who is visited by Lord Auberry, and by whom, I am pretty well assured, she has a child or children;—I believe her to be the Marchioness.—She sees nobody, except him

and Sir Ashton Montague, to whom, I fear, Lord Auberry will never be indebted for a reformation of morals. That young man was much with him abroad, and last night I saw them both at the playhouse, in Mrs. Oxburn's box, making violent love to her, and receiving no violent discouragement.

I was shocked at these horrible truths; for had they not been truths, they would never have come from the lips of Lady Busby.—I am not ashamed to say that I was shocked by them, because my emotions were unmixed with the weakness of jealousy or tenderness; but it was for human nature in general; it was even for myself that I felt a momentary, an indescribable pang, when I reflected, that two people, who appeared so amiable as Lord Auberry did to us, and so modest as the foreign Lady to a woman of so much discernment as Lady Busby,—who then, said I, shall depend on their own strength, if such characters as
these

these can, in the course of a few years, be so totally subverted?—I pitied the seduced, but I detested the seducer.

Our conversation had been interrupted by the return of the two gentlemen. We passed the remainder of the evening very agreeably. We sat down to supper at half after ten, and it was but very little more than eleven, when, to my great surprise, and, I believe, to that of every body present, Mr. Lexington made his appearance amongst us. He started back on seeing what a formidable party of us were assembled together; but recovering himself in an instant, and having paid his compliments, *en passant*, to the rest of the company, he pressed on to Lady Jane.

I fear, said he, the motive for my intrusion will not insure me a welcome from your Ladyship or your friends.

How so? she replied,—I think I may venture to assure you, both for them and myself, that whatever are your reasons for doing me the honour of dropping in, the

consequence will be highly acceptable to us all.

This partial sentence was generally confirmed, and, seating himself on a chair which he had moved next to Lady Jane—I am come, said he, at the express command of my aunt, not absolutely to break up your beautiful circle, (looking round him) but only to withdraw from it one single gem, with which she is ambitious to enrich her own; in plain English, and not to speak like a puppy, I am commissioned to escort Miss Montague to Grosvenor-square, with many acknowledgments for the trouble you have had with her.

His speech began with such a flourish, and ended with so much drollery, that every body but himself laughed without intermission. As soon as I could get myself heard, I asked him, if he really brought these grateful acknowledgements from the Duchesse.

No, faith, he replied, her Grace did not send them; but I, who know what it is to be
be

be with you, and that you cannot help tormenting people, thought it necessary to deliver them, on my own account.

I next enquired if any body had the goodness to study my accommodation so much as to order my chair to Bruton-street, that I might have it in my power to obey the commands of her Grace, as she chose to order me home, before my friends were at leisure to set me down?

Why, as to that affair, he replied, I was so very officious to serve somebody else, that I forgot what would be most pleasing to you.—Lady Elizabeth Jones's coach was standing in the square, which I borrowed, without asking leave, and came away to fetch you.

And do you really expect, Mr. Lexington, that I shall accept of you for my *chaperon*?

And why not?

Because I am so very unpolished as to think, one had better have no guide at all than be badly guided.

C 3

I thought

I thought as much, said he, from your monstrous education; and therefore, when I borrowed Lady Elizabeth's coach, I also borrowed Lady Elizabeth herself. She was stepping out when I stepped in, ordering the servant where to go, and she is now at the door waiting for you, in the sweetest temper imaginable.

I was frightened out of my senses, when I heard what he had done, and taking a hasty leave of Lady Jane and her friends, I flew away, leaving Mr. Lexington to make his adieus, and follow me, which he did the moment after I had seated myself by Lady Elizabeth in the carriage. I found her Ladyship in a much better humour than I expected;—she only laughed at the trick she had been served; and very politely added, she should think no trouble too great to procure the company of so good and compliable a young lady as Miss Montague.

We found the usual party collected in Grosvenor-square, with some additions;
but

but when I looked and listened, I was forcibly struck by recollecting the words of a noble commoner, when he had got a mischievous mob together, and was ready to cry out, in his own language, *These are not the right sort.*

Jan. 24.—Dressing Time.

Oh, dearest grandmamma ! what do you think has happened ?—Could you have supposed it possible ?—Yes, it is true, I assure you :—Lord Auberry has the effrontery to send word that he is come back, and intends to be here this evening. The Duchess is transported, but I am oppressed—I am confounded with this new proof of his assurance. Is it by fresh insults that he would banish from my memory those I

have already received? Can there be a greater proof of unfeelingness, than to pursue me with his presence, where he knows I cannot avoid meeting him?—Yes, I might avoid it, by feigning myself indisposed, and keeping my room; but every kind of deception is abhorrent to my nature, and I will meet him;—perhaps it is best for me that I should have this opportunity of convincing him, that whilst I do not forget the common forms of civility, even to him, yet that I also remember what is due to the dignity of my own character, as a woman of honour, and a daughter of the house of Auberry. With these reflections I am again as calm and composed as if no such man as Lord Auberry was expected.

Mrs. Tovee being with the Ducheſs and me when his Lordship's note was brought in, partook, with her usual complacency, in the pleasure expressed by her Grace, that she was to have so great an acquisition to her assembly.

I always

I always like, said she, when my rooms are stuffed with girls who have laboured to make themselves objects, that they shall have as many admirers as I can procure for them,—and Lord Auberry is so new, and so handsome, that I should be sure of their being well enough pleased, if every other man who is to be here was to disappoint me.

Well, to be sure, replied the echo-taught Mrs. Tovee, your Grace is so good to young people, it is quite charming;—and suppose the coronet that belonged to Miss Montague's grand-father, was at last to settle on her own head—that too would be charming.

Oh, how I dislike this woman! I should certainly have given her a little idea of the sentiments I entertain, both of her wisdom and sincerity, if the Duchess had not rebuked her with much more cleverness than I could have done, by telling her, it was officious and impertinent in people whom she permitted to visit in her family, to

make those sort of arrangements for Miss Montague, or any other person under her immediate patronage.

Well, that is charming!—that is so like me, Duchefs, when I married my daughter to a peer,—I let no soul advise me; and the poor girl is so happy, because I never consulted her about it, that it is charming, charming, to see how comfortably my Lord and my Lady now live together.—Well, to be sure—and they have the finest little children.

For Heaven's sake, have done boring one with your Lord, and your Lady, and your fine little children. It is very odd, continued her Grace, that people, who call themselves women of fashion, should be so ignorant of common forms and common politeness, as to talk of subjects which, they must know, are improper and disgusting.

Well, to be sure, it is so odd, that your Grace should never have been a mother,—and one is so apt to forget one's self.

Good

Good morning to you, said the Duchess, you grow quite disagreeable,—and walked into her dressing-room.

Mrs. Tovee is so used to deserve and receive these sort of familiar reprimands, that they did not seem in the least to affect her; she only observed to me, how unfortunate it was, that whenever her dear friend died, she would leave no representatives behind her. She asked if her coach was ready, (for she calls her chariot a coach) and being told it was, she took herself off, telling me she should come early in the evening; and having got rid of her, at least for the present, I came up to tell you what had been passing below.

The Duke continues his goodness to me; and has given me some hints similar to those of the Duchess, but in a different manner; he neither wounded my delicacy, by desiring I would not encourage danglers, or hurt my pride, by making me suppose the situation which he owned to have in view for me was above my pretensions;—

but who it is, I can no more discover now, than when I supposed it to have been his Highness the Mogul.

My hair is just finished, and I must leave off for this time, as her Grace has desired I will come to her as soon as I am dressed, to assist her in arranging some pots of flowers, with which the apartments are to be decorated for this assembly.—I wish it was over, with all my heart.

Just three Quarters after One.

Congratulate your Mary, dearest grand-mamma ! her trials are all over, and she has not disgraced those principles in which your goodness instructed me, and which I hope are so thoroughly fixed on my mind, as to be the last thing in this world that I will ever relinquish. I have not on this occasion

occasion even sullied them by timidity or weakness;—the formidable Lord Auberry has been here; he is gone again—I now only wonder how I could so foolishly have given way to the fears of an interview with him; and yet the part I had to sustain was sometimes attended by such difficulty, as made me tremble for my own prowess; but they did not proceed from Lord Auberry, as you shall hear.

The Duchess of Cleveland, who never wishes to have any trouble that she can reasonably avoid, had taken some pains to instruct me in the management of those over-grown multitudes which are called assemblies; and having found me no dull scholar, in a manner not to be resisted, though very much against my inclinations, she deputed me to the office she must otherwise herself have filled. When I would have declined it,—I will hear of no excuse, said she, you will do very well to receive the company,—they may come and speak to me, and I shall not be fatigued with them;
and

and as to arranging the parties who are to sit down together, I shall appoint Mrs. Oxburn to assist you.

I did not like my nominal partner, and, colouring with vexation, I requested her Grace would allow me to act singly, and let me apply to herself for any directions that might be necessary, in addition to those she had already given me.

Lord, child, that is impossible, she replied, I should be deafened with eternal questions; Mrs. Oxburn knows every body, and how to consult their inclinations;—was it left to you, my poor little foolish dear, would you sit down a husband and wife at the same table?

I should certainly try to make every thing pleasant to your Grace's friends, and can do what you propose without calling in the aid of any body.

I thought so, said she, laughing,—you are a perfect ignoramus,—I might as well shut up my doors in future, as let you commit such a *faux pas*; Mrs. Oxburn
knows

knows better, she must therefore assist you, and you will find her useful ; she will teach you more of modern customs in half an hour, than you would have learnt at Riverdale in a century.

Indeed your Grace must excuse me ; I would not offend you for the world, but I cannot accept the tutorage of Mrs. Oxburn.

She is my friend, Montague ; this dislike is very unaccountable,—however, since you think proper to declare it, I shall desire Lady Elizabeth Jones and Mrs. Tovee to fix themselves at your elbow, to see that you perform your part not like a boarding-school miss, but a young woman of fashion.

Could any body have supposed I should have rejoiced at being associated in office with Lady Elizabeth Jones and Mrs. Tovee ? yet I did rejoice, and received the proposition with so much unfeigned pleasure, and expressed so much gratitude to her Grace for making it, that her anger was

was subsided, and I heard no more of the odious Mrs. Oxburn.

I have repeated this conversation, as it is a sort of guide to the cause of certain dilemmas, into which I have this night found myself plunged, on more occasions than one.

Before any of the evening company were announced, the Duchefs gave it in charge to me, that as soon as Lord Auberry came in, I should bring him to her; for my being his relation would take off a great deal of needless ceremony, when I presented him to her.

I made some foolish excuse or other,—I believe I said I should hardly recollect him, and supposed he would not retain the least remembrance of me;—but as soon as I had an opportunity of speaking to Lady Elizabeth Jones, who had dined with us, and readily consented that I should officiate under her auspices, I made my request to her, that when Lord Auberry was announced, she would be so good

good as to receive and present him to the Duchefs;—I happened just then to be much in her favor, her Grace having repeated what had passed about Mrs. Oxburn;—she approved of my refusal, and was flattered by the preference I had given to herself, so that she did not deny me the most essential favor I ever have, or perhaps ever shall, ask of her Ladyship.

Mrs. Tovee came a full hour before any body else, as fine as yellow gauze and washed blond could make her;—the Duchefs, who had long before forgiven her mistakes of the morning, received her as if nothing had happened, and I was consigned to the joint direction of the two ladies.

At the first approach of visitors, they stationed me just within the door of the reception room, and themselves quite near me;—I spoke a few words to every body as they entered, and thought I made the most silly figure in the world, but Lady Elizabeth loaded me with praises; and as
to

to Mrs. Tovee, she almost wore out her favorite words of charming! charming! with using them in my service; there were some ladies and some gentlemen whom I had not seen before, and to those I was myself presented by Lady Elizabeth.—Every body passed on to the room where the Duchefs had retired to receive their compliments, and in less than an hour six very large drawing-rooms were at least more than half filled, and the frequent bending of my knees had reduced me to an absolute state of trembling, not unlike the cold fit of an ague;—I was every moment expecting Lord Auberry, but no Lord Auberry appeared;—Lady Jane Petworth, and the whole party with whom I passed my time so pleasantly yesterday, were not amongst the latest who arrived, and their presence gave a sort of freedom to my spirits, of which, till then, I had not known the comfort;—after going through the apartments, they all, or at least the greatest part of them, returned to me, and became
sta-

stationary like myself. At half an hour after eleven, by Lord Felton's watch, who stood with it in his hand, counting how many came in, from minute to minute, there was so considerable a cessation of repeated thunderings at the door, that my two conductresses led the way to the inner rooms, and assisted me to arrange the parties;—I was opening the cards for a set of cribbage players, when feeling one of my hands suddenly seized, not seeing by whom, and always having the fear of Lord Auberry before my eyes, I gave a violent start, and let them drop on the carpet,—my dear creature! cried Mrs. Oxburn, for it was she, what in the name of electricity ails you?—did you think it was your lover, going to bear you off in the face of a thousand rivals, that you felt so alarmed at my touch?—but, my dear, she continued, I really beg your pardon if I surprised you, I am but this moment come in;—pray can you tell me if Lord Auberry is here? or Sir Ashton Montague?
and

and what is become of Lexington? I have been peeping all over the house, and can see none of them.

The gentleman she last named, with Lord Felton, and two or three more, were standing round the card table when I gave them a specimen of my awkwardness, by letting the cards drop from my hand, and they had all stooped down with much good-nature to pick them up again;—Mr. Lexington hearing Mrs. Oxburn enquire for him, said to her, I am sorry, Madam, you should have had the trouble of pursuing me, and be so long disappointed; shall I go and search for the other two, after whom, it seems, you have been peeping,—by Heavens! here they come! added he; and at the same instant Lord Auberry and Sir Ashton Montague were actually announced.

I am not conscious that my countenance underwent any change, and yet I suppose I might at that moment look a little paler than usual, because Mr. Lexington said,
I see

I see you are tired to death with standing so long—I must make you sit down, drawing me to a chair that happened to be vacant—and I will attend you till you are pronounced out of danger. He placed himself behind me, and said a thousand lively things, in ridicule of polite mobbing. I forgot, in his entertaining fallies, the subject of my fears, and venturing to look round me, I saw Lady Elizabeth Jones, followed by the two friends, just passing the door which led to the inner drawing-room. Mrs. Oxburn had also disappeared, but I did not see which way she went.—Her figure and face are remarkably beautiful; and I never saw her look half so handsome as she did this evening.—What a pity it is, that a body so perfect should conceal a mind so depraved!

When I had rested a few minutes, I returned to my office, made myself as useful, and kept myself as busy as I could. I observed Sir Ashton coming up to me, and did not try to avoid him. After the
first

first compliments had passed, which, on my part, were civil, but reserved—on his, exceedingly easy and unconstrained, he asked what I had done with Lord Auberry?

With Lord Auberry! repeated I—upon my word, Sir, I can give you no account of him; I thought I heard you both announced at the same time—but was so much engaged, that I did not look round to see if I was mistaken or not.

And pray, my fair cousin, is your negligence general or partial? the Duchess tells me she has appointed you her representative.—Do you hear all names announced with the same indifference as, by your own confession, you did those of Auberry and Montague?—In my opinion, there are no two names in the world that would sound so happily, were they in unison with each other.

Ah! thought I, this man is in the confidence of Lord Auberry—and it is he who has taught him to insult me. I looked at him—he is called handsome—but

but at that moment he appeared quite ugly—for I saw, under his smiling countenance, duplicity, pique, and malice. I did not hesitate to make him a reply—had I remained silent, I might have been supposed to approve his insidious meaning. I was determined he should have no reason to think I even understood it, and, therefore, only replied, in a tone of *nonchalance*. It was not likely, from the steadiness of both their dispositions, that the friendship of Sir Ashton Montague and Lord Auberry would ever allow of their names being disunited.

He made me a slight bow, turned on his heel—and I heard him mutter to himself, as he went away, She is d——'d haughty, I see.

I am sorry to stain my paper with an oath; but you would know less of the man if I had omitted it.

Several gentlemen were standing round as this short conversation passed between us—and I was hurt, by the attention with
which

which they seemed to examine me. Mr. Lexington was not one of them—I wished he had been there—I wanted the presence of a third person, with whom, as one of the family, and the earliest of my acquaintance, I might have talked away my chagrin.

Mrs. Tovee was, by this time, seated at a table—we had dispensed with her further assistance—and I had not seen my other directress for a quarter of an hour. Lady Jane was also engaged at play; but dear Miss Beaulieu and the lovely Miss Fortescue had neither of them forsaken me, except, at the very critical moment when I should have found their support very much to my own advantage, Miss Beaulieu was dragged to a distance from me, by some inquisitive girls, who, she afterwards told me, asked her a thousand questions, of which I was the subject; and Miss Fortescue had crossed the room, to speak to her aunt, the Marchioness of Stair, who was there, with her two unmarried daughters.

ters. I shall have occasion to speak of them in another place.

From the time Lord Auberry had made his first *entre*, I did not venture to go beyond the door, through which he had passed, in his way to the inner apartments; and as I looked pretty often towards it, alway dreading his return, I saw Lady Elizabeth Jones, with her erect head towering above the middle of the crowd, who are constantly, I observe, coming out at one door and going in at another; and I saw, also, that she stuck in the midst—and that it was impossible for her to move backwards or forwards—she beckoned me—I got as near her as it was in my power to do—and as soon as a passage was made, that we could form an union, she desired I would find my way to the Duchefs as well as I could, her Grace having something or other that she wished to say to me. I requested she would go back with me—Not for the world, she said—the men were so heedless, and the women so im-

pertinent, she had nearly got squeezed to death in bringing me the message; but here, added her Ladyship, is Lord Felton, who, I dare say, will give himself the trouble to convey you through the ill-bred multitude—he politely offered me his hand, and I accepted the escort she had appointed me.

Do you think I did not expect to encounter Lord Auberry at every step I advanced? No—indeed I had much stronger apprehensions that I should have found him with the Duchess—and there I did find him, seated too at the same table with herself. When I saw him sitting opposite to her Grace, and his back towards the door, I would have given worlds to have made my retreat; but could I have declared to Lord Felton that I was either ashamed or afraid to meet the man who is the representative of my mother's family? he had heard the message delivered to me by Lady Elizabeth Jones. What reason, then, could I have assigned, but the true one,

one, for my caprice, if I had turned back without first asking the commands of her Grace? My situation was truly deplorable; but I ventured on, at all hazards—me—thought your dear voice seemed to encourage the effort I was making—I heard you say, in imagination, Now is the moment, Mary, to convince Lord Auberry that he is neither the object of your preference or of your resentment.

I walked steadily towards the Duchess's chair, but chose to take my station at the side rather than behind it, where I could not have escaped the notice of her partner. She did not observe me, till I said to her, I am here, Madam—Lady Elizabeth Jones informed me your Grace wanted me.—That is true, child, said she—but wait till I have played this hand out;—you are mighty mysterious, and I am quite puzzled to find out what you are all about. She was speaking of her cards, and to her party; but her words seemed so applicable to my own case, that I coloured like

scarlet. I did not know if Lord Auberry had observed me, for I never looked towards him.

Well, my dear, continued her Grace, as soon as the hand was over and another deal began, I sent for you to know if you are not half dead with the fatigues that must have attended your exertions? She said a good deal more, much to the same purpose, whilst she was taking up her cards, and sorting them.

I thanked the Duchess for her obliging consideration of me, and assured her it was impossible I should feel any of the effects she apprehended, as Lord Felton and Mr. Lexington had taken the whole trouble on themselves, and nothing but pleasure had been the result of my agreeable employment.

I have revoked, cried Lord Auberry, flapping his cards on the table.

But, my very good Lord, replied her Grace, you should not proclaim your own errors, your adversaries would soon enough have discovered them.

My

My God! said he, I would this moment confess a thousand more, if I had any hopes they would be forgiven.

No, replied Lady Francis Lexington, who was playing against him, we cannot pardon you the revoke, and must take the forfeit; you are eight—so we will only take two from your score, and add one to our own.

Would to God, Madam, you would take from the score of my days all that are yet to come of them, and add them to your own.

Have done, my Lord, with this despairing sort of repentance; if you will be more cautious in future, we may yet recover the fault. This was said by the Duchefs.

Never, never, he replied—I am thrown out of play, and the game is lost to me for ever.

It was the rubber game—and the next deal decided it in their favour.—Lord Auberry remained silent—and I attempted to make my release; but the Duchefs called

me back—Stay where you are, said she, a few minutes, and decide our fortune—the good luck you have brought with you will predominate, even over the petit errors of your absent cousin.

It was decided at the moment she spoke ; and Lord Auberry, hearing me addressed by the appellation of his cousin, could no longer carry on his pretended ignorance of my being so near him—he, therefore, made me a very formal bow, which I returned by a curtsy still more formal.

Bless me ! cried the Duchess, a good deal surprised, is this the first time, Miss Montague, that you have seen Lord Auberry since he has been here ?

Indeed it is, said I ; and the first time I have seen his Lordship these two years.

I find you very much changed, retorted he, in upbraiding accents, since I had the honour of seeing you at Riversdale.

From sixteen, my Lord, to five-and-twenty, our forms, as well as inclinations, are subject to revolutions. I suppose I
am

am a head taller; and I know that I am much more accountable to the laws of reason, than at that giddy period of my life when you honoured Lady Auberry with your company at Riversdale.

I hope Lady Auberry is well, he replied, with undescribable coolness—I beg, Miss Montague, when you write, you will do me the honour to present my compliments to her Ladyship.

I shall, certainly, my Lord, execute your commission.—I had said enough, and would venture to say no more; the Duchess was engaged in collecting her bets, and putting up her winnings. I took the opportunity of her being employed, and walked down the room, attended, as before, by Lord Felton. I afterwards saw Lord Auberry several times—but he was always so much engaged with Mrs. Oxburn, that, I believe, he did not see me; however his conscience might have been affected at first seeing me, the disorder was not of any long continuance—for whenever

I saw him afterwards, he was rattling away, in the highest spirits imaginable. I was standing near the door at the time Mrs. Oxburn came out to wait for her carriage; Lord Auberry and Sir Ashton Montague were each honoured with one of her fair hands.

The remainder of this eventful evening I must leave till to-morrow—the clock has struck five—good morning to you, dear grand-mamma ! I was never in better health or spirits in my life.

Jan. 25.—Morning.

I did not expect the two friends would come back any more when they went out ; but I forgot to tell you, that passing me at the door, Lord Auberry, in catching Mrs. Oxburn, who did stumble, or pretended

tended to have done so, trod on my foot, and that not very lightly, for he is of a much greater size than when you saw him last; it gave me some pain, but I made no complaint. He turned half round, cast on me a look of fury rather than contrition, and said, I beg your pardon, Miss Montague.

They were absent more than twenty minutes, and I was disappointed when I saw them return—but a thousand times more mortified to understand the Duchess had engaged them to sup with her; Lady Jane and her party were also invited, but did not stay—we should therefore have sat down with our own family only, in which I include Mr. Lexington, who has no home more familiar to him than this—if a fortunate accident that happened to Lady Stair's carriage, in its way to Grosvenor-square, had not detained her so late, that her Grace was under the necessity of adding to it the Marchioness and her two daughters, whom she abominably hates,

though they are on the best terms in the world.

Before I proceed, I must give you a sketch of these three ladies, partly from my own observation, but much more from the information of others.

The Marchioness was a needy woman of quality—her father's house was burthened with a long train of children, whom he could not provide for by all the manœuvres of politics, and all the savings of parsimony, so as to bequeath them a very moderate independence.

Lady Termagant Touchwood had seen some of her sisters well married, but was herself, at the age of thirty, unsolicited—she then formed an intimacy with a lady of high rank, and, under a mask of hypocrisy, continued to enjoy the benefit of her friendship till the hour of her death, since which she has behaved with such unheard-of treachery to one part of her patroness's family, who she knew was, by far, the dearest to her of any other object upon earth,

earth, that the stigmas of ingratitude and cruelty can never be wiped from her character ; and after hearing the particulars, which are too long for repetition, I can never look at her without almost sickening with horror ; her very countenance is disgusting ; it is so impregnated with frowns, hauteur, and concealment, that a smile is the most unbecoming thing in nature, when she attempts to veil them with an appearance of affability and good humour. The present dignity to which she is advanced she owes entirely to the mediation of that friend, on whose ashes, it may be said, she has trampled with more than inhumanity.

Of the young ladies, her daughters, I can only say, that they are like a hundred other young ladies, who were at the Duchess's assembly last night, abundantly lively, and abundantly loaded with foil and feathers.

The Duke of Cleveland would have me sit by him at supper ; Mr. Lexington was

next to me, on the other side; Lord Auberry placed himself between Lady Bell and Lady Bridget Langton; and Sir Ashton Montague desired he might be left at his liberty to walk about, often putting his hand to his forehead, as if he had a violent pain in it;—his excuses were admitted, and he was suffered to do as he pleased.

At first, he divided his attention pretty equally, sometimes talking to the Duchefs, sometimes to Lady Stair, and sometimes to her daughters, but avoided speaking to or looking at me.

Mr. Lexington was not in his usual flow of spirits;—perhaps he likes one of the Lady Langtons, for he scarcely took his eyes from Lord Auberry, who, one might have supposed, from his assiduities and apparent happiness, was a very favoured lover.

Lady Stair seemed quite delighted, and dropped some hints of encouragement, which I thought were even extended to Mr. Lexington, who perhaps she conceived to be examining the countenance of her daughter

daughter with admiration, instead of scrutinising that of Lord Auberry with something like envy, at his superior felicity.

In the mean time, when he saw the general attention pretty much attracted by the situation of his friends, Sir Ashton Montague slid round, took his post at the back of my chair, and leaning almost close to my ear, said, in a whisper so low that I could hardly hear him,

Beware of appearances, they will deceive you;—confide in Auberry, he will not betray you.

I never felt my judgment more insulted, than at the moment he dared to address me with caution so unnecessary, and advice so indelicate, so preposterous. I turned immediately to the Duke, and said aloud,—You are so gracious, my Lord, to honour me with the title of your ward, and here is a gentleman whispering wonders in my ear, which surpass credulity, and are very much beyond my feeble comprehension;—will you permit me to refer him to
your

your Grace for the solution of his very extraordinary hypothesis?

Hush, cried Sir Ashton, not another question, I beseech you :—con it over on your pillow, and you will solve it without difficulty.

There are many enquiries not worth our while to enter into ; and you will excuse me, Sir Ashton, if I declare that your proposition is of so little importance to me, whether it be true or otherwise, that I really shall not suffer the consideration of it to disturb one moment of my repose.

Not only the Duke, but every body present, except Lord Auberry, testified much curiosity to have the whisper expounded : however, I had said enough to explain my sentiments, if they really needed explanation, and suffered Sir Ashton Montague to get out of his dilemma as well as he could.

I hope I shall never be the subject of circle chit-chat ; and, to avoid it as well as I could, I endeavoured to hide my unconquerable

querable reserve towards Lord Auberry, whose connection would have given him the greatest claim to my confidence, had he never ungenerously abused it. How, thought I, will the world account for this strangeness between two people who are known to be related? will it be to my advantage?—perhaps not; I will give them no opportunity of remarking on my conduct; and I constrained myself often to mix in the same conversation with Lord Auberry, as if we were on equal good terms with the rest of fashionable relations; but whilst avoiding the observation I dreaded, by a condescension that cost my dignity some price, I guarded my words with so much caution, that I readily observed, the sacrifice I paid to prudence was by no means an offering to the vanity of Lord Auberry.

I have now done with yesterday—this day, I hope, will be a less busy one. Lord Selby, Lord Silvester, and Sir James Melvern have all engaged me to dance with them;

them; I suppose Mr. Lexington keeps himself for somebody else, but he says he is very ill, and shall not dance at all.

Dressing Time.

I did not design to make any addition to my journal till I returned from Lady Elderton's, but on going down stairs I met a servant from the Duchefs, who was sent to tell me her Grace wished to see me; and in consequence of this message, I have still something to add.

A note lay on the table before her; she bid me read it, and she would afterwards tell me more of her strange visitor. As well as I can recollect, the words were these :

“ If

"If the Duchefs of Cleveland has not been misrepresented to her petitioner, she will have the goodness to order her immediate admission—to grant her a short audience—to receive her alone—to answer a few questions, but to ask none."

Astonishing, cried I, was there ever any thing half so romantic?—but did your Grace admit her?

Certainly, and on her own terms, which I never attempted to infringe. My curiosity would have submitted to any thing rather than remain ungratified. I will tell you all that passed between us, and then leave the clearing up some suspicions, which I am beginning to entertain, to your own ingenuous candour and frankness.

Good God! madam, what can you mean? —What suspicions have I to remove?—What can I have to do with this mystery? —I was opposite to a glass, and looking up, saw a deadly paleness spreading on my face; I trembled all over, and should perhaps have fainted, if she had not immediately

diately added,—don't frighten yourself, child,—the questions I have to ask you should be rather the foundation of congratulation than terror. You are a wonderful girl indeed, if the being put in mind of an old conquest, any more than the making of a new one, should give you displeasure. But listen to me, and when I have told my story, you shall tell me as much or as little of your own as you please.

I thanked her Grace, and begged she would keep me no longer in a state of suspense, which, I could not but confess, was extremely painful.

Having read and considered the note, said she, I sent Johnson to ask amongst the servants, who it was that had delivered it? they told her that the person was a female, and then sitting in a hackney chair at the door, where she waited for the return of my answer; that the curtains were close drawn, and they only knew her to be a woman, from her having exposed a very beautiful hand when she dropped the glass and thrust out her
little

little billet, which she desired might be instantly conveyed to me, and she would wait my commands where she was.

I bid Johnson lose no time in bringing her to me, and in consideration of the evident reluctance she had to shew herself, I also ordered her to use such precaution, by sending every body out of the way, that she might come in and go out without observation. To tell you the truth, I had taken it into my head this was some begging gentlewoman—but a very proud one I conceived her to be, as much by the stile of her note as her coming to ask alms in a chair. I like odd characters, and was determined to divert myself at her expence, by seeing how far she intended to carry her shabby gentility; at any rate, a few guineas might be of service—and I took two from my purse, in readiness to present them to her.

It is easy enough to tell you what sort of a creature I expected to have seen—but it is impossible to describe to you the assemblage

blage of grace and beauty that I really did see in this stranger; and yet a very small part of her face was visible; a large hood covered the profile, and a bonnet shaded her forehead; a deep black veil would have excluded the whole of her countenance, had she not, in compliment to me, I suppose, fastened it up in the middle with a pin, which gave me a transient view of perfect loveliness. I do not know of what rank she really is; but, to judge from the haughty dignity of her deportment, and the superior force of her expression, she might be taken for the Empress of the Universe. I blushed at my idea of the begging gentlewoman—was ashamed of my two-guinea offering—returned it to my pocket, and asked her commands, with as much humility as if I had myself been nothing better than one of her bed-chamber women.

I did not interrupt her Grace; but whilst I listened, I also thought, What a prodigy of attraction, to occasion such sentiments,

sentiments, and to be the cause of such a confession!

You will say I am running on very wildly, Miss Montague, continued the Duchess; but, really, such were the impressions made on me by the first appearance of this stranger. She was very soon seated—for, with a freedom that seemed to do me honour, she did not wait my solicitations, but placed herself next the fire, and seemed to say, I will allow you to take the seat nearest to me.

I repeated my request to be informed what were her commands, and in what manner I could be of use to her?

I meet, said she, in the Duchess of Cleveland, all I was taught to expect from the condescension and politeness so often experienced by the people of my country, from the *Noblesse* of yours.

Her language was English, and perfectly correct, but her accent was Italian, and her voice in tune with the sweetest harmony of her own nation.

The foreign lady, of whom I had heard Lady Busby speak so lately, occurred to my remembrance; yes, thought I, this must be the mistress of Lord Auberry, and it is about Lord Auberry that I am to be questioned by the Duchess:—Thought is the swiftest messenger of the heart, and, stopping at the door of my lips, it made no pause in her Grace's narrative.

From the Duchess of Cleveland, proceeded my new visitor, I hope to find more than condescension, more than politeness,—I ask for her forgiveness, and I demand her sincerity;—are you acquainted, madam, with Lord Auberry?—have you a young lady under your protection, of the name of Montague?—is not Lord Auberry attached to Miss Montague?—are they not affianced to each other?—

I shall answer you, Madam, said I, without reserve.

And you will have the goodness, returned she, to spare me;—I blush that I cannot be candid as yourself, but it is impossible!

impossible!—a tear fell on her cheek,—she turned hastily from my observation, as suddenly wiped it off, as if ashamed to have given me even this single proof of her weakness.

I assured her that my curiosity should be no tax on her sensibility; and that, though the questions she had put to me were calculated to surprise, they did not offend me, as I could answer them very easily, without doing violence to my own inclinations, to truth, or to friendship:—First, you ask, am I acquainted with Lord Auberry?—I never spoke to him till last night; he was then at my assembly, and did me the honor to stay supper;—Miss Montague, the grand daughter of the late Lord Auberry, is at this time a part of my family, but of any attachment between her and the present Earl, I am quite uninformed; on the contrary, I have reason to believe, she is almost as much a stranger to his Lordship as I am.

She

She shook her head, rose up, thanked me for my extreme condescension to the peculiarity of her situation, and was conducted back by Johnson, who waited in the next room, with as much privacy as she entered;—and now, my dear, I must confess, that the movement of her head, and the smile of incredulity stamped on her expressive countenance, has left an impression on my mind, that it is only in your power to obliterate.

I never intended to have troubled her Grace with my confidence, but thus called upon, I cheerfully made a sacrifice to truth, of false pride, and false delicacy;—I had no reserve whatever,—she is now acquainted with all that passed prior to Lord Auberry's going abroad, to his conduct whilst on the Continent, I mean that part of it in which I am concerned; she is also informed, that the preference I once felt for him, has been long converted to the most calm and settled indifference,
never

never again to suffer any diminution;—I do not hate Lord Auberry, said I, such a sentiment might be the enemy of my peace, and undermine my tranquility;—I meet him with the same composure as I should have done, if he had not marked me out as one of the objects of his changeable inclinations;—I pardon his inconstancy,—I wish him happy as my relation, and I extend my wishes of happiness to the interesting subject of his present pursuits; she has nothing to fear on my account, and I would give the world, if it was in my power, to quiet her apprehensions; her situation, I fear, is not a doubtful one, but it has still a claim on my compassion.

The Duchess declared herself very well pleased with my adventures, as she was pleased to call the relation I had made her;—approved of my past conduct and my present sentiments, loaded me with caresses, promised not to betray the confidence I had reposed in her, and, finally,

hinted again the old story of the Great Mogul (so I must call this unknown half of myself, as long as he continues in obscurity.)

Mr. Lexington has sent his excuses for not attending us to Lady Elderton's; he pleads illness. The Duke is gone to see how he does, and the Duchess is not quite easy about him.

Some are languid, some are sick, some are dying with fatigue,—How comes it that I bear this laborious business of dissipation better than any body?—Lady Jane Petworth says, it is because I do not wear out my strength in making preparations; but I rather attribute it to the goodness of my constitution.

Lord and Lady Francis dine with us to-day;—we shall all miss poor Mr. Lexington, but I hope he will soon get well enough to come amongst us again. I wonder if his sisters are to be at the ball to-night;—I should suppose not, if their brother is seriously indisposed;—and yet nursing the
sick

sick is, I can discover, no fashionable town employment.

I wish this ball was over, for I do not like any one of my partners; you cannot conceive how they teize me with studied compliments, which I do not like to receive, and know not how to answer; I would dance myself to death rather than sit still a quarter of an hour with either of them.

Oh, how little did the Duchefs of Cleveland know of my sentiments, when she cautioned me against encouraging dangles! If I was the wickedest creature in the world, I should think the severest punishment for my sins would be that denunciation that would sentence me to hear my own praises from the mouth of Lord Selby, Lord Silvester, and Sir James Melvin.

Jan. 25th.—Morning, Four o'Clock.

I quitted, even at this late hour, Lady Elderton and her assembly with reluctance.

E 2

Herself,

Herself, her company, her music, her supper—every thing charmed me: there was no Lord Auberry to keep me in perpetual apprehension—no Sir Ashton Montague to follow and insult me: my partners did not incommode me with any attentions beyond those of civility and politeness; and when I had gone down with the three first, they were succeeded by others, who, I am obliged to confess, were ten times more agreeable than themselves.

Lady Jane, Miss Beaulieu, and Miss Fortescue were there, but did not stay long after supper. Miss Beaulieu will entertain you with all the particulars, which I have not time to enumerate. I have taken an affectionate farewell of that dear friend, and shall now seal up my Journal;—receive it, best beloved of parents, as the shadow of your Mary's thoughts, and the transcript of her heart.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

Dowager Lady Auberry, to Lady Jane Petworth.

Riversdale, Jan. 21, 17—.

I Accuse you, madam, of having disturbed my repose, of breaking in on the dead and heavy calm in which I had wrapt myself at the latter end of my journey, as with a cloak,—not to guard against the storms of the world—it has had no storm for me since my dear little Mary first prattled at my side. I wore this internal garb of apathy, to secure my peace from the invasion of the world's follies, its tumults, and its anxieties; and what have you done?—you have dissevered this garment, there are now a thousand breaches in it, and I am overwhelmed. Joy, hope, fear, pride, and expectation rushing in, there is no resist-

ing their impetuosity.—Instead of saying my prayers and going to bed, as I used to do, and as all old women should do, the last office I perform, is to sit down at my fire-side, and read over all your inflammatory letters, 'till I lie down, with my head and my heart so full of the fine things you have told me, that when I should shut out all worldly objects, and go quietly to sleep, I see nothing but Mary Montague before my eyes, dressed for court,—gentle, soft, captivating, as you describe her, followed by many, admired by all, and adored by your amiable Lexington. These are the ideas for which you have forced me to exchange all my store of nothings, and all my wealth of dulness.

I think almost as much of your Mr. Lexington as I do of my own Mary. If he has the good fortune to engage her heart, my own shall be divided between them.

The imagination of old people, like a fire that has been long smothered, if it ever
does

does rekindle, is not indolent in its progress, or easily extinguished. When I had once got hold of certain romantic whims, I could not relinquish them. I fell asleep with a thousand chimeras in my brain; and when I should have been dreaming of death and the doctor, I was transformed into a fine lady, dressed out, and gadding about every where with my Mary.

You tell me of a Lord Selby, a Lord Silvester, and a Sir James Melvin, who, you suspect, will be the rivals of Mr. Lexington. Nor him, nor them, nor any other man in the universe, shall wear my rose in his bosom, but at her own election. No, my dear friend, she has discretion above her age, and refinement above her sex: the first will govern her choice, the latter will secure her happiness. These are sure guides; we may safely leave her under their direction.

The dear child has asked me, in one of her letters, some leading questions respecting the fate of her parents. I think it is

time now that she should be informed of the circumstances attending their marriage and her own birth. I rely on your friendship for me, and your affection for Mary, to break them to her with all the softening such painful particulars will admit of, and all the tenderness of which your own tender heart is capable.

Ah! my good friend, my kind Lady Jane, this afflicting task should not have devolved on you; but it was the request of her father, that the morning of her days might not be clouded with the representation of scenes gloomy and sorrowful: For if my daughter, said he, in the last letter I ever received from him, should be of an unfeeling volatile disposition, a too early knowledge of our misfortunes will have no other effect on her heart, than to render it more callous to the claims of sensibility;—perhaps they may cost her some tears, but at the first summons of pleasure, these tears will be wiped away. She might occasionally think of our sufferings, but when they
return

return upon her recollection, she is in danger of drawing comparisons, which will make her pass over the sufferings of her fellow-creatures too lightly. Let her reason, therefore, be matured, before her passions are assailed; then may the trials of ~~her~~ parents serve as a lesson of humanity to herself. On the other side, should her mind be timid, flexible, abounding with sensibility, subject to tender, melancholy impressions, the reason for absolute silence still subsists, at least till her constitutional weakness has acquired strength by the force of experience and the energy of reason. In one instance, it is the good of many I consult; in the other, I consider only the preservation of her own happiness.

Are you not a convert, my dear Lady Jane, to the arguments so forcibly advanced by my unfortunate son-in-law? and can you blame me that I have hitherto complied with them, to the very strictness of his meaning? I was not altogether biassed to the secrecy I have preserved merely in

obedience to his injunctions ; because they in a manner still left me at liberty. The disposition of his daughter answered not to his descriptive images.—No; the dispositions of my Mary were compounded of sound judgment, invariable steadiness, innocent gaiety, noble candour, universal philanthropy, affections without credulity, and sensibility without weakness. It was not that I feared she would feel too little or too much, that I did not make the sad relation of my woes at a much earlier period ; but an event that happened to herself, and which has ended in a disappointment, made me hold back that information, which could only tend to cast an hereditary gloom over her own faded prospects, and to give her an idea, that she was to be wretched by inheritance.

You ask, how her heart has hitherto been affected ? I shall tell you every thing without disguise. Indeed I was prepared to gratify your request before it was made ; and in those lonely hours, when I had no

Mary

Mary to solace me, I sketched out a sort of narrative for your inspection, which you will receive with this letter.

I write to Mary by the post; I send my packet to you by a private hand, as I think she had better not exactly know what passes between you and I in our present correspondence. She does not like to be told of lovers, so let us not be supposed to have found out that she has particular attractions for any body.

The more I reflect on Miss Beaulieu's goodness to me, the stronger is my debt of gratitude to her, and I am quite in despair when I feel my inability to discharge it. I expect her with the impatience of a friend, and I shall love her with the fondness of a mother. I only wait her arrival at Riverdale to prevail on my poor Martin, who I fear is in a bad state of health, to try the change of air. At present, I cannot get her to hear me on the subject, but when I am so happy as to have another Mary Mon-

tague with me, I will listen to no more of her objections.

I have still to make the addition of a few strokes to my miniature picture of man's inconstancy, and shall, my dear friend, bid you adieu to finish it.

M. AUBERRY.

ANNALS OF LOVE,

(NOT MODERN.)

PART THE FIRST.

*Written by Lady Auberry, and addressed to
Lady Jane Petworth.*

A Daughter of Lord Basil, and the heir-
ess to a considerable fortune, met Mr. Pley-
dell at an assembly:—he was handsome,
she young;—they were enchanted with
each other at first sight.—His proposals
were made in form to her father, and were
rejected for no other reason in the world,
but because the lady had rank and riches,
and the gentleman was but ill accommo-
dated with either. Prospects he had, and
these prospects terminated in an earldom ;
but

but the perspective was at such an immense distance, Lord Basil could not, or would not see it:—and as to his estate, that, alas! was entirely personal.

The lady, supposing her father's scrutiny too partial, undertook herself to examine the propriety of her lover's pretensions, and found out, in his open, manly, and beautiful countenance, such treasures of virtue, such inexhaustible mines of happiness, that she wondered how it was possible Lord Basil could be so very much deceived in his calculation; and effectually to convince him of his error, she gave herself a legal right to the abundant riches of her own discoveries.

What a charming adventure was this for a girl of seventeen, preceded and followed by all its natural consequences! An infant without a mother, trained up under governesses, who taught her, that to be a fine Lady, she must also be a despot, and humbled their own necks, that she might learn to trample over them, almost before she

she could walk without her leaders:—her head stuffed with romances, and her temper stubborn by indulgence. These preceded her stolen nuptials; and of course there followed a flattering reception, a hearty reconciliation, some love, some disputes, much repentance, and a great deal of misery.

Settlements were proposed by the father, but the lover was now a husband, and it was his turn to refuse. The Lady, who had learned a lesson of submission in much less time than might have been expected, rallied on the side of her lord and master, —pleaded the disinterestedness of her affections;—what a stigma it would cast on it to have a shadow of doubt pass over the honour of her husband;—should not the man she had entrusted with herself, have also the unbounded guardianship of her nasty dirty acres? Such arguments were unanswerable; and, when enforced by tears and caresses, who could withstand them?—not her poor father, for he had

never any will but her own ; and Mr. Pleydell was so well pleased with the success of his instructions, that he did not insist on her making any more sacrifices for a long time, because she had given him this trifling specimen of her obedience.

Lord Basil lived ten years, and imagined (but it was a wrong idea) that he saw his daughter superlatively happy, after her own way :—she wished to have her situation appear in this false light ; it was the only recompence she could make to him for her folly and disobedience.

All this time she had been studying in the school of contradiction under a most morose and severe master ; she had learned also a great deal of self-knowledge, and how to gain a victory over the errors of education, from which all the bitters of her life had been extracted, but in which the heart was in no manner concerned.

The study was a hard one, and the pains she took indefatigable, not only to learn her lesson, but to conceal, under a smiling;

smiling countenance, the harsh, unaffectionate, and intemperate language of her instructor, who never appeared before the fortunately hood-winked father in any other light than as being worthy of his tenderest approbation. Besides, two lives had now dropped between Mr. Pleydell and his honours;—the perspective was more than visible, even to Lord Basil; he had now nothing to regret, but that his dear spoiled daughter had no progeny, to lead up through the avenue which terminated in so ancient a house, and a coronet so splendid.

His Lordship would, at this æra, have thought it the most unpardonable crime of which he could be guilty, had he made any independent provision for his daughter. What use could she have for money, who had a husband that adored her, and with whom she must partake of a fortune more magnificent, and titles superior to his own?

In

In this temper of mind he made his last will, adding to every thing which was her's by settlement, all his own personal and accumulated wealth, to the amount, in the whole, of two hundred and forty thousand pounds. His daughter knew nothing of the disposition he had made, until the will was opened, after his funeral : It was then time enough for her to be informed, that she must ever live in a state of servile dependence on a man who acknowledged no deity but avarice, and no consideration for any body but himself.

The effects were all his own, and having taken possession of them, this blessed couple retired into the country, not only to avoid unnecessary observation, but unnecessary expence ; for that insatiable thirst of riches, by which he was ever pursued, the more it was fed, the more it required to be fed : and the superfluities—almost the common necessities of life, were sacrificed to the account of accumulation.

His

His wife was not of the same sentiments with himself; but we will say nothing of her disappointments, or the vexations attending them. Custom, it has been justly observed, is a sort of second nature, and the difficulties of her self-chosen captivity, though not diminished, were much more supportable at the distance of twenty years, than they had been at the close of twelve months after her marriage.

The nineteenth year of her union, and the ninth of her imprisonment, produced two events that seemed to prognosticate happier days: her family promised an increase, and her husband succeeded to the long-expected title, together with an estate still more valuable, in his estimation. All these agreeable circumstances happening so near each other, seemed greatly to have changed his temper, and the wife was again considered as something better than a mere upper servant.

He had often wished for children, yet dreaded the expence of rearing them. She had

had frequently, after the first ten years, been in a similar situation to that she was in at present; and, during the first months of success, his repinings were without number, and his fretfulness without end. Here am I, he would say, going to be burthened with a parcel of children, who may turn out, for any thing I know, a plague and torment to me: a certain expence they must be, and how am I to support it? your father did not die half so rich as I expected he would have done, yet I dare say you would think yourself mighty ill used, if I did not keep you up like a lady of quality.

Something or other always happened to prevent the evil he dreaded; and then it was, by G—, madam, these repeated disappointments must be owing to your negligence, or to the d——d stubbornness of your temper, and the pleasure you take in making me miserable.

He became an Earl;—his wife was in the way of bringing an heir;—he once
more

more assumed the language of affection, which, after the first six weeks of married felicity, he had used as cautiously as his purse, except in the presence of her father, since whose decease it was laid by, and seemed totally forgotten.

But now the case was altered ; and, as the poet elegantly expresses the idea, " he fears that the winds of heaven shall visit her face too roughly," though storms and time had left very little in that face worth preserving.

Does she walk round the shrubbery, he fancies her fatigued—flies himself to the house for servants and a chair, to assist in bringing her back ;—she is obliged to submit, but blushes at her submission. He walks by her side—holds her hand in his, and pushes away with his foot every loose pebble that may entangle the steps of her bearers.

If she sits down on any but the easy seat he has appointed for her accommodation, he is in a paroxysm of despair, and entreats,

treats, for the love of Heaven, she will consider her situation, if not for his sake, yet for the sake of that noble boy on which the inheritance of both their houses so absolutely depended.

A London residence was procured, and the most astonishing preparations made for the reception of the little magnificent stranger, about a month before it was expected he would make his debut. The Lady was conveyed to town by easy stages, and funeral paces, but in all the state of a princess, and as many attendants as if she had been the Grand Signior's favourite Sultana.

Alas! she was still a captive, and had only exchanged one prison for another. She was neither to receive or pay visits, and seldom to take a peep from her windows, under the apprehension some passing object of terror might alarm or afflict her.

The hour at length arrived, when, instead of the noble boy so anxiously looked for, a lovely female child brought his excuse, so
much

much to the mortification of her father, that the first time he saw her was by chance, and not till she had been nursed at my bosom three months:—for do you not conceive, madam, I have all this time been talking of Lord Auberry and myself; and that this sweet messenger of consolation, at least to her mother, was no other than that dear Mary, on whom, at our return to Riversdale, you performed the offices of a little nurse, though only eight years older than herself; on whom you afterwards bestowed that tender friendship which has not ceased with her existence, but is eminently distinguished in your goodness to her orphan daughter?

Lord Auberry, from the time of his fatal disappointment, imbibed a strong dislike to his home: we continued in town six months, but seldom met. Happiness and I were but newly acquainted; her habitation was in the nursery of my infant, and I never sought for her in any other place. Often I endeavoured to entice my Lord to
partake

partake of my inexhaustible entertainment, but he fled from my solicitations, declaring himself an enemy to children, 'till they knew how to return his notice with gratitude.

I now received my friends, went sometimes to court, and, not to be quite unlike the rest of the world, now and then shewed myself at such places of public amusement as were fashionable forty years ago; but much the smallest portion of my time was allotted to these sort of concessions. If the world is no better now than it was in my days, I am sure Mary Montague will have no greater *penchant* for it than I had.

From the most indolent person in the world, Lord Auberry became a party man, and turned his attention to politics with so much avidity, that his health, his fortune, and his repose were not thought too serious a sacrifice in the support of his newly acquired principles.

As soon as he had given over all hopes of a son, to inherit his titles and possessions,

sions, he began to enquire who it was that the laws had provided for his successor; and finding it was a Mr. Pleydell, who had a seat in the house, but voted on the contrary side with himself, in the rage of party madness, he procured an interview with him, and offered him at once, if he would go over to his side, he would, (provided he had no male issue) bequeath him at his death all his property, except a provision of fifteen hundred a-year to his widow, and ten thousand pounds to his daughter,—the first to revert to him on my death, as also the legacy to Lady Mary, if she should die unmarried, or without children.

Mr. Pleydell was not enough the hero of his former party to fight their cause any longer, at the expence of such advantages as were now held up to him by his noble relation; he agreed without reserve to the proposal and required nothing on the part of the proposer, but that the bargain should be made secure to him and his heirs, before he would venture to break with his col-

leagues, or relinquish those advantages, of which he was very sure, by means of his present connection.

The demand was so modest, and so moderate, that it was immediately complied with ; and when this delectable deed was irrevocably completed, signed, sealed, and delivered, I had then, and not till then, the honour of being received into the confidence of my Lord, who, coming to my apartment, said, with an air of reproachful insult, Since I can no longer depend on you, madam, for bringing me a son, I have taken care to provide myself with an heir ; my honours and my estates shall never be separated ; I have this day so strongly united them, that unless you bring me a boy, or give me the opportunity of being the father of one by another wife, my present engagements to Mr. Pleydell are indissoluble. However, I have taken care of you and your daughter.

He then mentioned in what manner, and left me abruptly : but on what conditions
he

he had 'made' this sacrifice of his most sacred duties, he did not inform me; it was by accident I afterwards understood the nature of them.

I could have wept, exclaimed, wrung my hands, and tore my hair; but I have never comprehended that any consolation is to be derived from the efforts of violence; I therefore considered that my life was now of greater importance than ever, to the interest and happiness of my injured infant; that if I suffered any sort of agitation to prey on my spirits, and undermine my health, I should become accessory to the cruelty of her fate. A few drops of silent torture fell on the beautiful face of that dear child, as I pressed her to my bosom, but her smiles soon dispersed them; and when I met Lord Auberry again, he seemed astonished at my composure; but his surprise was unmixed with approbation, for I heard him mutter to himself,—This is all hypocrisy, or d——d insensibility; confound them both.

As long as we remained in London, which was till the prorogation of parliament, we seldom saw each other in the day, and often he would pass night after night from his family, without thinking it at all necessary to give me reasons for his absence; nor indeed did I require that he should; for in truth, I could not have rejoiced if my upbraidings, or any other cause, had procured me more of his engaging company than in his own bounty he was inclined to bestow upon me.

This was my last excursion to town, except on the presentation of my daughter, which was only two months before she came of age; but my Lord never failed of spending the whole sitting of parliament there without me, and without so much as once asking me to go with him.

The bud of reason began at a very early season to expand itself in the mind of my Mary; and I think you will allow with me, that at the age of twelve, when you married Mr. Petworth, and went abroad with him,

him, she had no rival, either in beauty, understanding, or sweetness of temper.

I never complained of Lord Auberry's injustice to herself, or his neglect of me; and the tenderness with which she was attached to him seemed, at certain moments, to affect him with remorse for the robbery he had committed on that property which was indisputably her right, as the natural heiress both of her father and my own: but though he could not prevent himself being pleased with, and returning her innocent caresses, yet he was too proud ever to acknowledge he had done her an injury; on the contrary, though he knew the very name of his appointed heir could not but be disgusting to my ear, he not only spoke of him eternally, but he also brought him twice to Riversdale, where I was obliged to receive and entertain him.

Mary was three years old when he made me his first unwelcome visit; her father had been absent six months; I told her, as she sat at my feet dressing her doll, that

her papa was coming, but when he entered my dressing-room, followed by Mr. Pleydell, she had forgot his person, and running up to the enemy of her interest, she clasped his knees with so much grace and affection, that I never can forget the lovely action, much less the death-wounding words that attended it.—Dear papa, cried the charmer, have you brought me a fine new doll? what a good papa you are, to take care of all Mary's money!

It had been her custom, before he went to London, to bring her father all the sixpences which were his own gifts, when, in better humour than common, back to him, and on his going the last time from Riverdale, he had promised to lay them out in a doll; this promise was still remembered, but the application she made to Mr. Pleydell, instead of her father, covered me with confusion.

Were not her expressions almost prophetic?—I thought so, and snatched her away, as he was stooping to caress her,

her, as if his touch had been infectious ; nor would I again bring her from the nursery, during ten days that this insidious robber continued the guest of Lord Auberry.

It was, as nearly as I can recollect, within a very short space of time after I had the misfortune to regret the removal of your family from my neighbourhood, that Lord Auberry informed me he had prevailed on two Ladies of his acquaintance to make me a visit, extolling them to the skies, and assuring me, how much I should be pleased with their society. .

Remonstrances would have been in vain, had I been inclined to remonstrate. I could form no very flattering idea of my intended guests ; for surely women of delicacy would not have been so easily prevailed on to visit Lord Auberry, with whose wife they were totally unacquainted. However, they were his friends, and with the hope, that during their residence at Riversdale, I should at least see him in

good humour, I made no objections. On the contrary, I received them, when they did come, as if I saw them on my own invitation. Their intentions, I had no doubt, were correct, and it was only that they shewed too little regard to the laws of decorum for which I condemn'd them. How was it possible to suppose, that a mother would accompany her daughter on a scheme of prostitution?

The name by which these curious people were presented to me was Lott. I must give you a sketch of them in this part of my narrative.

Mrs. Lott appeared a handsome vulgar creature, on the shady side of forty—good features, brown complexion, dark eyes, and bold countenance; very fond of her daughter, very free with my Lord, and downright servile to my Ladyship.

Miss greatly resembled her mamma in every thing, except in the advantages, which were all her own, of youth, figure, and complexion. Her age was under
twenty ;

twenty; her person tall, slight, and not inelegant; her skin, originally dark, but so artfully covered with white and red, that it must have been a more skilful inspectress than myself, that would not have supposed Nature had culled all the lillies and roses from her own choice garden, to plant them on the cheeks of my rival. Yes,—it was too true, and I cannot conceal the humiliating circumstance.

The affected reserve of this girl's behaviour to Lord Auberry,—his total negligence of her,—and the undivided attention he bestowed on her mother,—were truly ridiculous; yet I was fool enough to be blinded by the cobweb artifice, till accident revealed to me, that his Lordship had more taste for youth and beauty than he was willing I should discover. I neither congratulated nor upbraided him on making the discovery, but satisfied my scruples by merely hinting, that I should not regret their removal from Riversdale.

My Lord, who knew I was apprised of what he wished to conceal, and had a much deeper scheme in view than I was yet able to fathom, condescended to intreat that I would have patience with them a little longer, and, to attain the ends for which he laboured, flattered me by saying, that he never found out the deficiency of their education, till he had compared it with the refinements of my own, or he would not have forced them on my acquaintance.

Such unlooked-for concessions filled my head with I know not what of romantic expectations. He had violently torn from my heart the flowers of peace, confidence, and affection; but he had not been able to root out from it the still flourishing wishes, nourished there, for his reformation.

I cheerfully consented to his request, but under a promise, that when this visit was ended, he would never again subject me to a repetition of it.

After

After our conversation, I behaved with something more than my accustomed civility to the pliant old harridan, and her mincing, lisping, languishing daughter. But there was so much gravity mixed with my condescension, and so many hints escaped me, that I had no power to suppress, that it did not require to have my abhorrence of them explained in plainer language, and which, I believe, they had just understanding enough to comprehend in the fullness of its extent; for whenever I opened my lips to speak, it was evident they feared what I was going to say, by the looks they cast on each other, and the confusion that covered them.

All this time I have made no mention of Lady Mary, and I will tell you to what my silence has been owing: when informed that two Ladies intended to honour me with their company, whose names I had never heard, and whose characters, if not doubtful, were at least open to the censure of too much freedom, I considered on

the impropriety of my daughter, now in her thirteenth year, mixing with people who came to me under no favourable auspices, and of whom I knew no more than that they were the friends of Lord Auberry; and from these considerations it was, that before the appearance of my visitants at Riverdale, I contrived to send her out of the way, pretending she wanted change of air, and did not permit her to return back until I had the good fortune to get rid of them.

During my very long and solitary seclusion at Riverdale, I had found much employment, and no small share of amusement, in making such additions to the natural beauty of the place itself, as my fancy dictated, or my finances would admit. Amongst all the little edifices scattered here and there through the pleasure grounds, none of them had cost me so much attention, so much expence, or repaid me with so much gratification, as a small octagon temple, erected in the park,

on the summit of a high and almost perpendicular ascent, which commanded one of the most lovely, as well as the most extensive prospects in the universe. I dare say you remember this enchanting spot; but for fear you should have forgotten how my little building was contrived, I must remind you of it, for I am going to repeat a conversation, curious enough, and which would never have reached my ear but for the oddity of its construction.

Recollect, if you please, that after the walls were raised, I hung it round with a false lining of glazed canvass, so coloured as to represent stucco, on which I had myself painted various poetical descriptions and historical events; this hanging was so ordered, that though it seemed to adhere to the building, behind it was a gallery six feet deep, which contained shelves for receiving all sorts of things that could be useful to me, when I chose to read, write, work, or play, at the distance of half a mile from my own unpleasant abode;

I would

I would have called it a paradise, if the perpetual discontent of my Adam had not cloathed it in terrors : here he could not pursue me, for I had so heinously offended him, by expending the monstrous sum of a hundred pounds in completing my design, that at the time he found himself obliged to discharge my debt, his fury ran so high, as to make me think I should be driven from Riversdale, and obliged to seek for shelter in my new-raised apartment ; but though his passion lessened by degrees, so great was his hatred to the poor inoffensive object of my labour, that, far from taking the trouble to inspect it, if he was walking that way, he would never turn his face towards the fatal spot of his wife's extravagance.

Here it was that I always held myself secure from interruption ; and to this asylum did I fly from affectation, vice, and hypocrisy, the morning after I had consented to my husband's intreaties that I would permit his abandoned associates to

remain yet a little longer under the roof with me.

As I ascended the flight of steps, I thought the sound of more than one voice came from the interior part of the temple; the door was open; I looked in, but saw nobody; I stood still—listened again and again—heard the same voices, which I could now distinguish to be those of my husband and his two modest companions. I had formed suspicions, that the detestable old beldame, who passed for the girl's mother, was, in reality, no otherwise connected to her, but by the affinity of their vicious pursuits; and I formed them on the supposition that Nature never could have blotted a page of her work with infamy so complicated. This is the time, thought I, setting my foot gently on the last step, that they might not hear my approach, this is the moment which will probably explain more of their mysterious history than I am yet acquainted with.

The

The first words I could distinguish, as I crept nearer that part of the canvass which concealed them from my sight, the pannel being again closed through which they had entered, convinced me this was the first time my husband had ever honoured my temple with his presence; for he said, I suppose in answer to some observation of theirs,—Yes, it is well enough, but has cost me a d——'d sum of money; I shall never pay any expence on her account without murmuring, except for her funeral—on that single occasion, Ladies, I would be generous to profusion, would she but soon put me to the trial—then my dearest Nancy should reign in her stead, by G—d.

Perhaps you expect that I gave a great scream, and fainted away, as it is the duty of all heroines to do, when they overhear any thing so much to their own disadvantage,—but you are mistaken: I was so much used to hear him wish for my death, that it affected me no more than if he had
said

said to me good night, or good morrow. There was no breach in the conversation, though I have made one; I leave you to repair it, and desire you will draw the old Lady's answer and my Lord's observation as close together as possible.

I'm sure your Lordship is purdigious obliging to my poor Nanny, and as you cannot marry her yourself, I hope the gentleman you intend for your successor won't put off and put off his coming much longer, so that there might be any alteration in her shape before he sets about gaining her affections.

Gain her affections! interrupted my pious Lord, in a voice of thunder, do you forget the station of servitude from which I raised your daughter to the honours of my protection? do you forget the dung-hill from which I picked you up, brought you into the world as people of fashion and reputation, settled you in a splendid situation, got you visited, and have even introduced you, under these borrowed advantages,

tages, into my own family and to the notice of Lady Auberry?—and yet, wretch as you are, you dare talk to me of another man's gaining the affections of your daughter—those affections that are mine by purchase.

I heard them both fall at his feet—I heard them kiss his hands: the old one whined—the young one sobbed—and his own utterance was choaked with fury.

I was afraid this charming scene would end in fits, and that he might bring one or both the afflicted sufferers nearer the door to give them air; I therefore went on the outside, to avoid being surprised by their sudden appearance; but in a few minutes harmony seemed restored, and I returned to my post just in time to hear the infamous prostituer of her own child (for of her being the mother I could no longer entertain a doubt) say to my husband:

O, no, my good Lord, I never meant no such thing;—God forbid my Nanny should

should ever love any body but your Lordship. I have lived in great families enough not to know, at this time of day, that the greatest Ladies in the land do not love the men they are forced to marry, and yet are thought never the worse for that; and when your Lordship has made poor Nanny a great Lady, by giving her your own kinsman for a spouse, she may do as the rest do, and no disgrace to her any more than to them.

These words opened to my view a conspiracy quite new and entertaining; and the explanation which followed, on the part of Lord Auberry, when Miss Nancy tenderly pressed him not to give her to the arms of another, let me at once into the whole of their amiable manœuvres.

Nancy, replied my sagacious Lord, by making you the wife of Pleydell, I do not resign a tittle of my right in you; on the contrary, I expect from you, after I have established your fortune, more love, obedience, and submission than ever.

But

But I had rather not marry at all, said the artful whimpering little gipsy,—indeed, my dear, dear Lord, I had rather live with you, and wait for the death of Lady Auberry.

Then you might wait long enough for a husband, child; nothing will swallow her up but an earthquake; I have been chizzling on her constitution thirty odd years, and d——n me if I might not have made as much impression on a block of adamant.

I thought of my beloved, my defenceless Mary, and lifted up my grateful heart to That Power, who had enabled me to give him just cause for his philosophical observation.

You hear what my good Lord says, Nanny, so don't be a fool; for my Lady is, to be sure, as stout and hearty as you or I; and don't you take it into your head that her Ladyship will let you live with my Lord and her; I don't think my Lady likes us, though she must suppose us, by
my

my good Lord's bounty, as grand as herself; I sees her look at us sometimes till all the blood in my body gets into my face; and if she don't like us now, what would she say should she find that my Lord is in love with you?

She has found it out already, said my affectionate husband, and would have turned you both out of doors, if I had not flattered her vanity, and cringingly sued for your detention a little longer; but the devil should have fetched me before I would have submitted to intreaties, if I had not just then received a letter from Pleydell, that I may positively expect him here to-morrow; the appearance of her protection will be useful in our plans, and faith I should hardly know how to manage without it; for though he has but a few hundred pounds a-year, he may have his scruples as well as other men; and if he was to suspect your real situation, he might rather remain as he is, than burthen himself with my mistress, and father my infant.

I heard

I heard the whining infamous mother beginning to pour out praises and thanksgivings, when he put a stop to the foaming torrent of her gratitude, by bidding her be silent, and not to interrupt him till he had done speaking.

When I first saw you, Nancy, in my way to the Bank, I believe it was somewhere about St. Paul's, I had been long in pursuit of a fine-looking girl, like yourself, to marry my heir, and be the mother of my son. I had hitherto met with nothing in that way, whose appearance pleased me so well as your's; it was fancy directed my choice—inclination was not concerned in the business. I followed you into a milliner's shop, and found out that your station there was the slavish servitude of attending half a dozen brats, and on low wages.

I went home without speaking to you, and before I sent for you to wait on me, the scheme I had in meditation was half executed; for without education it was impossible I should bring you into that sort of
life

life for which I intended you. I had procured your admission at the most respectable boarding-school in town, under the character of my ward, who, though a considerable fortune, had hitherto been debarred from receiving any advantages superior to the lowest rank of females, her father being so penurious, that, to the hour of his death, she had no better employment than doing the menial work of his house.

This necessary step being taken, I ordered your attendance on me at my own house, and rejoiced that your mother came with you, as our preliminaries were the sooner settled.

Two years I supported her as a widow of fashion, and saw her improve so well, under my private instructions, that except in the article of grammar, and other little incorrectness of speech, she has not been much inferior to those circles where I presented her.

Your

Your progress, my dear Nancy, in all the polite modes of the world, was still more rapid; and at the period I mention, I received to my arms, not the servant of a little shop-keeper, but a complete fine lady, in the form of an angel; and I loved you with fervour, not only for your own sake, but because I had done even more than Nature;—she had only given you charms, but I had polished them.—My jealousy was equal to my love, and every man that surveyed you was the object of my curses.

Your mother obeyed the commands I gave her, and secluded you from all eyes but my own, except when I attended you to such places and people as I chose you should visit. But when you acquainted me with the event I have so anxiously expected, and the probability there is that you will bring me a son, who, by marrying you to Pleydell, will sooner or later inherit my title and estates, under the description
of

of his natural heir—this intelligence has cost me many struggles ; you know how they have ended, and that I bring you here that, when he first sees you, it may be under the protection of my wife. The better to deceive him, I have made you a ward in Chancery, and given you a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, which must, with all my other possessions, have been his own at my death, whether he had refused or accepted my recommendation. So you have nothing to do but improve the charms and good qualities I have ascribed to you, and entangle him as fast as you can ; but as for your affections, you are to preserve them for the father of your child. For, by Heaven, if you ever consider Pleydell in any less disgusting light than the man I have forced on your acceptance, I will blow you all to the devil, though a pistol was to end my own existence the next moment.

This tremendous threat, I suppose, had its due effect, but I did not remain a witness of the termination. I had already

heard enough to petrify me with amazement, and, stealing off unperceived, I left the villainous trio to pursue their further deliberations.

Can you conceive any situation more disagreeable than that in which I found myself now plunged? On the one hand, conscience told me I became the confederate of their crimes, and the abettor of their horrible machinations, by not endeavouring to frustrate them. On the other, I was hushed by my resentment to Mr. Pleydell, and the fear of a decided separation from Lord Auberry, to the detriment of my poor Mary's better establishment, not to interfere in the diabolical business, but to let them go on as they pleased.

I at last hit, as I supposed, on a mighty fortunate expedient to stop its progress, without endangering my own safety, or the interest of my daughter.

Finding it impossible to meet the two abandoned women at my own table without treating them as they deserved, I sent
a mes-

a message to my Lord, begging he would dispense with my appearance at dinner, as I found myself unwell, and could not entertain company that day, but should be glad to see him in my dressing-room at his leisure.

I asked my woman, who went down with my request, how the Ladies were amusing themselves, and what answer she had brought me back? she told me, the old Lady was reading, and the young one playing at chess with my Lord; that they all three seemed very much concerned at my indisposition, and sent up a great many kind wishes for my recovery;—Mrs. Lott observing to Martin, that she believed there was not so delightful a Lady upon the face of the whole earth as my Ladyship. Martin added, that my Lord desired his love to me, and would be sure to pay me a visit as soon as he had dined.

The interval between his sending me the message, and following it up with his presence, I passed in fortifying my mind with

G 2 resolution,

resolution, my temper with composure,—in making pathetic speeches, and in giving them all the force of energy ; but, amongst the rest, I had forgot to study my own weakness, and, for want of knowing myself, had raised the heroism of my spirit on so feeble a foundation, that it all tumbled to the ground, the moment I saw him enter at the door of my apartment, and shut it after him.

He looked gay, happy, assured—I wept, trembled, and was near sinking under the load of timidity that oppressed me.

Which, think you, had most the appearance of a culprit?—Oh ! there is no doubt but all the world would have seen in me the guilty wife, in my Lord the innocent husband.

However, this was but a momentary eclipse of fortitude, and when the cloud of horror had passed over it, my faculties revived, and, as the light of recollection returned, I found myself equal to the combat I had myself challenged.

Having

Having answered his enquiries after my health, which were more distinguished by the ridicule of his countenance than the tenderness of his expressions; and to which circumstance, it is probable, I owed a considerable portion of my newly-assumed courage; and having also bespoke his attention, with an air of solemnity that I saw affected him with surprise, I told him of the discovery I had made, and the great concern it had occasioned me—beseeching him, whether he meant to pursue or forego the intentions for which he brought the woman and her daughter to Riversdale, he would no longer insult me with their presence, but remove them immediately, at least from my sight, that I might try, in their absence, to forget their vices and their insolence.

Instead of flying into a passion, which I expected he would have done, Lord Auberry was humming different tunes the whole time I had been speaking; but at

length he interrupted me, still preserving the same air of coolness as before.

Pray, Lady Auberry, how much longer do you design to hold forth? I am d——'d tired already—and my fair friends will expect me below.

And can you really call these wretches your friends, my Lord?

Yes—and the very dearest of my friends, my Lady—mimicking my tone and gesture.

You will, at least, free me from their ~~locity—you will not force your wife to~~ associate with prostitutes, after the mask is torn away that concealed the infamy of their conduct?

Faith, Madam, I have just now so little time to throw away in listening to the melody of your tuneful accents, or to make my responses in form, that I shall draw them into 'as narrow a compass as will merely serve to open the eyes of your sublime understanding, as to your own precarious

carious situation, and my unalterable determination.

If you are to speak so decisively, my Lord, be but as just as you are sudden in your decision, and I shall have the less reason to complain of being so soon deprived of your company.

You condemn me without reason, my sweet complaining dear.—I did not mean to withdraw myself from you, but to take you with me; but first we must settle our little matters, preparative to your appearing before my friends without disgracing them.

No, Lord Auberry—though you murder me on the spot, I will not go down to them.

But hear me, before you resolve—after that, I leave you the mistress of your fate. First, then, to give you a proof of my sincerity, I confirm the truth of all the circumstances that your hellish curiosity made you mistress of this morning; and, secondly, I establish the fact, that my

lovely, tender, and amiable Nancy has long been, and ever shall be, the dear, the only object of my undivided fondness.

Are you a father? and have you made no reserve of affection for your unoffending daughter?

Had I a thousand daughters, and ten thousand wives, and every one of them as charming as yourself, I would sacrifice them all to my mistress; and so far I hope to have made my sentiments plain and comprehensive to your Ladyship's capacity.

Words so cruel, I could only answer with my tears; and though it is near forty years ago that I shed these original drops, some copies of them have fallen on the paper, whilst I am on this part of my narrative—yet, how different the expression! those were wrung from my heart, these only fall from my eyes.

Nothing is so unbecoming in your sex, continued this tender husband, for whom I had sacrificed duty, discretion, fortune, every thing but reputation—nothing so great

great a destroyer of beauty, as fullness. I despair of ever seeing you look so pleased and so pleasing as my Nancy; but I will try to lighten up your countenance, by throwing a little more spirit into your features, by giving you my commands in short-hand, together with the pains and penaltics of disobedience. First, then, you are not to interfere with the marriage between my heir and my mistress, neither directly or indirectly. Secondly, you are to go down with me, and join my friends below—to exert yourself willingly, cheerfully, and pleasantly, for their amusement—carefully to conceal the great depth of your knowledge in their affairs—by no dark looks to reproach them—and by no private steps to wound the delicacy of their apprehensions. I shall also expect that you are not only particularly guarded against betraying me to Pleydell; but that, as long as I shall see it convenient to retain the party in my house, you shall behave to

them all as if they were the chosen friends of your own election.

And these are the concessions you expect from your wife—from the daughter of Lord Basil?

They are, madam—and irrevocable as doom's day.

You drive me to extremities, my Lord! I am not your slave, and will never bow my neck to the yoke of infamy, though the consequence should be our eternal separation.

He made me no reply, but went out of the room—was absent about ten minutes—and came back again, holding some folded papers in his hand.

The consequence you were just now hinting, said he, would not be very distressing, I believe, to either you or myself; but there are other consequences attending our separation, which, for want of proper information, you may not have duly considered—I am willing to lay them before

fore you, from the most disinterested motives. It is only your future happiness I would have you consult—my own is out of the question, and can in no possible manner be affected by your Ladyship's determination.—You have a daughter, Lady Auberry!

And you, Lord Auberry, have a daughter!—would to God she was as dear to you, as she is to her ill-fated mother.

I am going to give you one proof that your wishes are unnecessary, for when, by your refractory temper, the same roof cannot cover us both, and you condescend to seek another asylum, my affection for Lady Mary will induce me to retain her for my consolation. And I now swear, by Heaven and Earth, by every thing visible and invisible, the same moment that separates Lord and Lady Auberry, separates Lady Auberry and her daughter for ever!

Have you still a greater misfortune in reserve for me than this, my Lord?—name

it, to insure your conquest! for you have yet pierced my heart only, but not shaken either its strength or its rectitude!

Well, then, we will have one trial more. You see these papers in my hand—they are the settlements I made on you and Lady Mary, at the time I entered into treaty with Pleydell; you must submit, or I cancel them, and leave you nothing but beggary and repentance!

You leave me more!—you still leave me a treasure, that is all my own! but which I would most willingly divide with your Lordship.

Dam——n! madam—come down from your stilts, and make yourself more comprehensible.

I mean an approving conscience, my Lord.

If that be all, we will find a way to accommodate the duties of obedience to your own romantic whims; for, if there be any foundation for your superior virtues,

tues, you should sacrifice something to the establishment of the same principles in your daughter.

Ah! cried I, in a voice of agony, that I had been long trying to suppress, they are already established—and I would sacrifice more than life to their preservation.

You know Miss Lott, Madam, and may recollect she has none of your starch, prudish, antiquated notions. Perhaps you will not altogether approve that I should take Lady Mary from a school of puritanism, to place her in one of ease, good-humour, and liberality. You may not think, from the vanity you entertain of your own opinions, that Nancy Lott, when she is Mrs. Pleydell, will be quite so good a tutorefs for my daughter, as you would make.

O God! cried I—cruel as you are, you cannot intend it.

Lord Auberry assured me, such were his intentions; and confirmed them with an oath,

oath, so binding, that I sunk, senseless, at his feet.

I have dwelt too long on the heroism of my defence—I shall be less minute in the representation of my defeat—suffice it to own, that I was vanquished; but let me add, it was not the blandishments of vice, or the terrors of fear, to which I submitted. There was but one consideration that he could have advanced with success—that one he forced me to encounter. The innocence of my child at stake, I could distinguish no other object. I gazed on her danger—my strength was turned into weakness—and all my powers of opposition revolted.

My Lord having brought me to the edge of the precipice, drew me back from it, with more gentleness than he supposed I had any right to expect; and, as a testimony of his approbation, that I had at last given up my will to his management, he voluntarily declared, he would endeavour

your to save as much as he could from his present income, with a view to make the addition of another ten thousand pounds to the same sum which he had already settled on his daughter. But of all his flattering concessions, there were none that afforded me comfort, except the permission he gave me to occupy my own apartment, unmolested, the remainder of that miserable evening.

What followed might be easily imagined—I have not patience to describe the particulars. Mr. Pleydell was true to his appointment; he came, he saw, he conquered—or, to make the compliment more applicable to the occasion, I should have said, He came, he saw, and he was conquered.

I neither let down my sex's character, or displeased my Lord, by supporting its dignity. I maintained my own consequence, by a distant, cold civility—but studiously avoided giving him offence; my looks were guarded by the most exact caution—

caution—my words measured by the rule of political prudence—and, though I did not give his guilty associates any proofs of my friendship, he appeared satisfied, that I tried to conceal from them how much they were the objects of my detestation. In ten days after the arrival of the destined husband, all preliminaries were agreed on; and at the end of a fortnight's severe penance, I had the felicity to see them depart, attended by Lord Auberry, to complete those arrangements in town, that were so curiously begun at Riversdale. Their absence restored my tranquillity—I immediately recalled my poor banished Mary—and, in her embraces, almost forgot I had ever been unhappy.

The first intelligence I got of my late visitors was conveyed to me through the channel of a morning paper, and in words which I am very sure were of my Lord's own dictating. He seldom sent me the papers; and I should not have seen them now, but to give me another specimen
how

how very far he meant to carry the plans of deception he had so warmly adopted; I have cut out the paragraph, and have kept it every since; pray read it—I send it to you as no common production.

“ The beautiful and accomplished Miss Lott, who last week gave her hand at the altar to Mr. Pleydell, heir aparent to Lord Auberry, is, we understand, the ward of his Lordship; and has been long training by the Earl and Countess for her present situation. Her own fortune is twenty thousand pounds; besides which, her affectionate patroness has presented her with jewels to a considerable amount; and the Earl compliments the young couple with a superb service of plate, to the amount of five thousand pounds. We also hear, her Ladyship intended to have graced the nuptials with her presence—but being prevented, by indisposition, took a very tender leave of her engaging favourite at Riverdale, a few days prior to their celebration,
at

at the town residence of the young lady's mother."

It was full eight months before I heard any more of my Lord, or his new connections; at the end of that time he returned to Riversdale, more capricious, more fretful, more peremptory than ever. What fresh cause he had for this accumulation of chagrin I did not enquire; but it was very soon explained to me, by a letter I received from an old lady, my god-mother, who never omitted, once a-year, to give me this token of her remembrance. Amongst a great deal of other chit-chat, she did not forget to tell me, Mrs. Pleydell was brought to-bed of a daughter, and, though born something before its time, was likely to do very well. She expressed her sorrow that it was not a son, on my Lord's account—and declared the general opinion of every body was, that the mortification he expressed on the occasion, was nearly as great as it could have been, had he

he expected an heir of my presenting, and found himself disappointed—for which generous disposition his Lordship had gained much credit, she said; and every body hoped the next time he might be more fortunate.

I was reading this curious letter, and smiling to myself, when Lord Auberry, who I supposed was gone out to hunt, unexpectedly entered my dressing-room. I dreaded nothing so much as ever again returning to that subject which had once so bitterly distressed me; and would have concealed the good old woman's gossiping epistle, if I could have done it—that was impracticable—he had seen it in my hand—and, what was more, he had seen me grinning, as he called it, over the contents. It must be of an extraordinary complexion, he said, to bring a grin on my countenance. He snatched it from me—ran his eyes over it—then threw it into my lap, drew a chair close to my side, and sat himself down by me.

Well,

Well, madam, and so, I suppose, when you answer this infernal Jezabel, you will tell her all your own melancholy tale—rejoice at my disappointment, and call it a judgment for my sins.

Indeed, my Lord, I shall not—I wish to forget the one; and I sincerely wish you to be sorry for the other.

All in good time; but you must certainly tell her I am the father of that cursed ——

I laid my hand on his mouth—Stop, I cried—stop, for the love of Heaven, and do not curse your own offspring.

I felt his lips press the hand I held over them;—Thank you, said he—you have saved me from a crime that is unavailing to commit—I ought to have known curses would not change the intruder's sex, and have kept them for a better purpose; however, I will repay your generosity, by this assurance, that I will never see the d——d brat, or its infamous mother, again, as long as I live. Whether he kept or broke

broke his promise I am not able to tell you. Mrs. Pleydell bred every year; but all her children were girls, and died young, except the present Miss Pleydell, to whom my husband had a claim prior to that of her nominal father.

Lord Auberry, immersed in politics, and spending, as usual, half his life in London, yet grew much fonder of Lady Mary; and every time he returned to Riversdale, she made a considerable advance in his good graces. When she was seventeen, Mrs. Pleydell, supposed to be in a decline, was sent to the South of France, by order of her physicians; and I must do my Lord the justice to say, that her departure did not seem in the least to afflict him; though, two years after, when accounts were brought to him that a son and heir had made his appearance, for whom it was impossible he could imbibe any particular predilection, I thought he would have gone distracted. Mary's presentation was put off for two winters, because
it

it took him up juſt ſo long to reconcile himſelf to an event the moſt natural in the world.

About this period, ſome letters from his party, complaining of Miniſters, and the length of time he had abſented himſelf from public buſineſs, awakened him from the lethargic indolence of a diſappointed mind; and he flew to town, leaving Lady Mary and myſelf to follow him, as ſoon as we could prepare ourſelves for the journey.

I here end the firſt part of my narrative. Martin has already led you through the melancholy labyrinth of my ſubſequent trials, which were all terminated five years after, in the death of Lord Auberry.

Theſe are events, from which my too-faithful memory ſeldom lifts the artificial veil of forgetfulneſs I have forced myſelf to throw over them.

ANNALS OF LOVE,

(NOT MODERN.)

PART THE SECOND.

A Lovely Rose there grew
Within my shady bowers,
Which sip'd the morning dew,
Unrival'd queen of flowers.

It stole the blush of May,
Its cheek the theft disclos'd ;
Soft was its air, and gay,
Its aspect all compos'd.

At ev'ning, noon, and morn,
I kiss'd this darling flow'r ;
This Rose without a thorn,
That hung upon my bow'r.

Its

Its maiden, modest hue,
So guarded, so retir'd,
No insect round it drew,
But purest thoughts inspir'd.

Its heart, a glowing gem,
No canker had assail'd,
Or prey'd upon its stem,
Or on its sense prevail'd.

When heavily and slow
A pelting storm goes by,
Its heart just feels the blow,
One tear escapes its eye :

Phœbus his beams disclose,
Sunshine again pervades
The bosom of my Rose,
And gilds my pleasant shades.

I set out with this poetical flourish, to let you see, that though Apollo is a deity of infinite intrigue, he is no respecter of persons, but easily intricated; and that a girl of eighteen has no greater chance for his favour than a widow of four-score. It is a long road to Parnassus;—I therefore
fit

fit down at the foot of the mount, to continue my little history.

An allusion to the orphan sweetness of my grand-daughter, when I celebrate the opening Rose of my solitary bower, might, on my part, have been the production of vanity; but will you not allow that it also has its foundation in truth?—yes, you do allow it, and a still greater similitude in the new light I am now going to present her to you.

At the age of sixteen, she was in person, mind, refinement, sensibility, understanding, and steadiness, what you now behold her two years in advance. She was moreover at that time my companion, my friend, and my counsellor—the director of my steps, the light of my eyes, and the support of my weakness—an inexhaustible bank of mental wealth, from which I drew large sums of happiness, without fear of having my drafts protested.

The fortune she inherits from her grandfather, in right of her poor mother, is

twenty thousand pounds; for when Lord Auberry accepted the propofals of Colonel Montague, he kept his word, which he had given me, to double the fettlement he firft intended for Lady Mary; and not knowing the match had taken place, or that ſhe had left an infant behind her, my grand-daughter's fucceſſion to that part of his fortune cannot be diſputed. I believe I forgot to tell you, that when my Lord made this laſt arrangement, he complimented me with the optional choice of accepting a thouſand pounds for a houſe, or continuing at Riverſdale during my life; and I choſe the latter.

Her father's eſtates, which were fortunately entailed on his children, whether male or female, are her's alſo, as well by his will, made after the death of her mother, as by his family fettlements. It is not a common thing to mention females under an act of entail—I therefore call this particular exception fortunate, becauſe ſhe would otherwiſe have been excluded from
any

any benefit of her father's landed property. Six thousand a-year would have reverted to another branch of the same house; and the persona's, which do not exceed two thousand pounds, had then been the whole of her paternal inheritance.

I set out with giving you this sketch of her worldly affairs, that when you have united them with the charms of her person and the endowments of her mind, you may be as much puzzled as I am to find out for what cause she has been subjected to the caprices of insolence, to slights, to disappointment, to neglect—treated like an insignificant, and forsaken without ceremony.

Twenty-four hours after the decease of my late Lord, amongst other letters directed to him, I opened one from Mrs. Pleydell, who, I knew, had returned to England some years before, and that she had left the body of her mother in France, covered with the unhallowed dirt of that country. She had not heard of my Lord's

illness—it was impossible that she should—the poor, miserable man having only two short days to prepare himself for an awful eternity! The fatal disorder was an inflammation of the bowels, and attended with extreme torture.

You will be surprised to hear me say, that a letter from Mrs. Pleydell to Lord Auberry could afford me any satisfaction—yet it really was the case—because it fully explained that their criminal connection ceased before she crossed over to the Continent, and had not re-commenced since her return to Britain; a circumstance that, whilst it lessened the guilt of my husband, added to my composure, and strengthened my languid hopes for his future happiness. Another event it also made known to me, with which my Lord had never acquainted me—it was, that Mr. Pleydell had been dead six months. I discovered likewise that my Lord was appointed sole guardian to his son, then nine years old; and that he had already acted under the trust, by
fixing

fixing the boy at an academy, giving him a private governor, and by other arrangements, which evinced his acceptance of the office.

I ordered my steward to inform Mrs. Pleydell her letter had been received, and opened by me; and that he had my commands to announce to her the death of Lord Auberry.

Ah! my Lady, said the honest man, looking me respectfully in the face, with a sentiment of mingled grief and surprise, is it possible your Ladyship can have so much condescension for ———

Stop, Boden, cried I, seeing his attachment to me would lead him on to invectives, go and do as I bid you—Mrs. Pleydell is the widow of your late Lord's relation, and the mother of his heir; and I will have her treated with respect.

There are occasions when one must speak decidedly; and though it hurt me to prevent the poor man from saying what he had a mind to say, I should have found it

more difficult to answer his importunities, had he proceeded further. He was the favourite servant of Lord Auberry, and, I have reason to believe, very much in his confidence; but he always declared to one of my women, whom he afterwards married, that he served his Lord from duty, but his Lady from affection. He was a little Welsh boy, that I took out of a charity-school; and the gratitude he felt for me, as his first patroness, pleaded his excuse for disputing my commands before he could bring himself to obey them.

By the oddest fatality in the world, it happened, that the very gentlemen I had requested to act with me in the management of my grand-daughter's fortune, were appointed by my husband to perform the same office for his young successor. By means of this whimsical sort of connection between the guardians and the children, I often heard of Lord Auberry, in terms, such as, had he been the son of any other mother, I might have listened to

to with pleasure, and even have favoured the alliance, which was sometimes hinted at, both by Sir William Sage and Mr. Racklief, as suitable to the happiness and interest of both their wards; but I would not hear them patiently on the subject, prejudiced as I was against his little Lordship, not only because he was descended from Miss Nancy Lott, but because I regarded him as the usurper of that fortune, which, by the laws of nature and nations, should have been Mary's, in her own right. I would, for these reasons, as seldom as possible, permit his name to be mentioned when she was present, lest the encomiums of his guardians might give her a desire to see and be seen by a youth so handsome and so amiable as they described him to be.

I do not pretend to give you this instance as a proof of my judgment; but you will allow that it was a very strong one of my determination, to keep them asunder. My two good friends wasted much sound reasoning to make me a con-

vert to their opinion; but finding me incorrigibly attached to my own, they at last desisted, and scarcely spoke of him again for many succeeding years.

Mary had nearly completed sixteen, when Sir William Sage made his last visit to Riversdale; his health was then in a very precarious state; and he was but too true a prophet, in foretelling that it would be the last time he should ever see me, for he died in less than five months after his return. His attachment to my granddaughter was more like that of a father than a guardian. I knew he had a nephew, who would also be his successor; and that he had been long studying at Geneva, to which place he was sent when very young. Sir William now informed me, that he expected him home in a week or two; and if, added he, your Ladyship will have the goodness to sign his passport to Riversdale, a few happy hours with you and Miss Montague will repay my poor boy for the many tedious ones he must

must probably sacrifice to his old, infirm uncle. I assured him of a welcome reception; and that I would endeavour to detain his nephew with me as long as he could find amusement, within or without doors, to keep him from breaking into open rebellion against my arbitrary government.

There was something singular enough in the answer he made me; and I accounted for it, by supposing he wished me to encourage an union between this young gentleman and my grand-daughter, to which, had I found him as worthy of her election personally and mentally, as he was by birth and fortune, Sir William must have known I could form no reasonable objection.

I know, said he, I am about to send Frank on a dangerous service, where he is more likely to be covered with scars than crowned with laurels; I almost think it will be, what the soldiers call a forlorn hope; but the possibility of a victory is so glorious, that to give up the attempt,

however hazardous, would be the action of a coward. Forgive me, madam, continued he, though I may not be alive to intreat your pardon, at the time I most stand in need of it—forgive me, I say, if hereafter you discover something like duplicity in my conduct, and find out, that in committing my boy to the honour of your protection, I have more in view than his present amusement, or the transient felicity of a moment.

About a fortnight after, he wrote to me, and said he had fortunately procured the seed of some extraordinary choice plants, from the East Indies, of which, knowing my fondness for exotics, he hoped I would do him the honour to accept; and give the messenger, who would in three days present them to me, some kind proofs of my benevolence.

I could be at no loss to understand who was this messenger, so recommended to my gracious reception; and at the time appointed Mr. Sage arrived.

I had

I had favourable *presentiments* of my intended visitor, before I knew whether or not he deserved my approbation; and I offered up many a silent wish, that the young people might happen to like each other, as the best possible means to prevent her ever becoming the daughter-in-law of Mrs. Pleydell, and the wife of Lord Auberry—an event which I considered might be brought about by the guardians, if I did not see her establishment accomplished before I sunk down into the last and kindest repose of nature.

I had pictured to myself, that in Sir William's nephew I should not see a man remarkably handsome, because the family countenance gave me no reason to expect any of that race could be an Adonis; but his eyes must be expressive, his teeth white, his person good, his manners graceful, and the *tout ensemble* irresistible.

Had I held up my little portrait to the eyes of my grand-daughter, before we saw the original, she would probably have

laughed at the idea, and told me the picture must have flattered any man entitled to wear the name of Sage; but had I shewn it after she had seen him, I should have given her reason to accuse me of not doing him justice. I saw, with joy, that I had been a bad painter—a mere dauber; and that it was as improbable Mary should refuse him her esteem, as I considered it impossible for him not to endeavour the obtaining it.

His first visit was a short one—he staid only ten days; but he came again, again, and again—and each succeeding one was longer than the former. The event, so ardently desired by Sir William and myself, had effectually taken place, yet we forbore to write on the subject to each other—neither had the young man's intentions proceeded to any direct declaration, either to Mary or to me. The adoration he paid to her was mingled with that sort of fearful timidity, which, the very best casuists will tell us, are the certain signs
of

of a respectful, tender, and enduring attachment.

But how could these wise philosophers account for the same sort of timidity to her grand-mother, who has nothing forbidding in her aspect, who loved him, and whose hands were affectionately stretched towards him? Whenever he approached her, those shrivelled hands he would hold to his lips, and press them between his own—all at once seem terror-stricken—gaze on me, rather as an awful judge, who was to pronounce his sentence, than a fond parent, willing to connect his fate with the darling child of her solitary existence. What the wisdom of philosophers might find difficult to explain, may be rendered intelligible, if you give yourself the trouble to proceed any further in the tale of an old woman.

Mr. Sage continued to come and go at his pleasure, as if he had already been a part of my family. We always hailed his return, and lamented his departure.—

Mary

Mary liked his conversation, was pleased with his attentions, but, I am persuaded, had never entertained a thought that she was the magnet, whose attractions forced him to repeat his visits so often. A week elapsed beyond the time he had limited to spend at his uncle's; another went by, and he did not return; I was myself disappointed and uneasy—Mary still more anxious.—I said to her, What ails you, my dear? you look pale—you eat nothing—your spirits forsake you—I shall either have you sick, or I must consult a physician to prevent it.

Indeed I am quite well, she replied; but I am very uneasy about Mr. Sage—I am sure some accident must have happened to him, for he told me, just before he left us the last time, that nothing but death

She was prevented from saying more, by Mr. Sage, who came that moment into the room, and, by his dress, convinced us that it was death, though not to himself,
that

that had occasioned his absence and our alarms.

I do not ask you, said I, why you have staid so long away, or for my good old friend; if your mourning habit did not explain every thing, I might read our common misfortune still plainer in your dejection, in the redness of your eyes, and the paleness of your altered complexion.

All, all is true, said he; I come to bid you farewell—Sir William is dead, and I am ———. He could say no more—he threw himself on a chair, by the side of Mary, and sobbed aloud.

He could not have made another so interesting a claim on her affections, as by thus engaging her sympathy; but he seemed almost insensible to the sweet tones of her voice, though soothing, sorrowful, and accompanied by tears.

This appeared a favourable moment for leaving them together; it was plain his distress did not merely arise from the death of his uncle, there must be some latent cause

cause for grief so extravagant ; and she was much more likely to be made the confidant of his secret if I retired, than if I continued with them.

I am going, said I, to fetch a cordial for our patient,—do you, my love, in the mean time, say every thing you can to comfort and console him.

Amongst a thousand confused reasons that crowded on my imagination for the wonderful depression on the spirits of my young friend, one only I considered as admissible ;—it was, that his uncle had disappointed him of the fortune he expected, and that not finding himself any longer able to prosecute his alliance with my grand-daughter, he meant to go abroad ; and perhaps, thought I, the life of this dear youth may eventually be the sacrifice of an unfortunate attachment, if I do not strive to prevent it.

With these sentiments, I withdrew to a situation from whence I could hear whatever passed between them, without their suspecting

suspecting me to be a witness of their conversation. My determination was, that if I found Mary as sensible of his worth as I wished her to be, and himself dispossessed of his inheritance, still to make him the object of my choice, her fortune being enough for both, and, by crowning their loves, to secure, not only my own approbation, but my own felicity.

The place so well adapted for my being an unobserved spectator, was a light closet that joined my dressing-room, which little place, eleven years before, I had filled with all manner of play-things, to divert my beloved Mary Montague, so that at any time, if we happened to become troublesome to each other, she would go to her dolls ; and I had the still more rational amusement of watching, through a glass fixed for the purpose, all the pretty manœuvres of my enchanting companion. Some children are infants longer than others : Mary was of the latter description ; and before she
was

was quite eight years of age, we had converted our play-room into a library, where might have been found other books besides Tom Thumb or Jack the Giant-killer.

Take that part of the dialogue which I heard distinctly from this little apartment; it may surprise, but will not fill you with one half of the astonishment which the relater of it experienced at the moment of detection.

Mary had been saying something, but I came in too late to hear what it was; I guessed, from his answer, she had been trying to console him.

Never, said he, I never can be comforted.

Sir William then has deprived you of his whole fortune?

Ah, Miss Montague! I had no right to expect it;—I am not the heir of Sir William.

Then I have been deceived in Sir William;—I thought him the best of human beings, and I have heard him often tell

Lady

Lady Auberry, he had no other heir than his nephew.

He has no other;—he was also the best, the kindest of friends; and yet he has imposed on Lady Auberry, entangled me in a passion fatal to my peace, and left me a wretch without hope.

Is it possible you you can praise and dispraise the same person; represent him as the dearest of your friends, and the bitterest of your enemies? I do not comprehend how this can be;—but why do you not advise with my grandmamma, and follow the counsel she will give you.

Would to GOD, Miss Montague, I was not what I am, or that you were the granddaughter of any other woman in the world than Lady Auberry.

I saw the dear child burst into tears, and heard her say, as she started from her seat,—We never meet again, Sir; it is you who have deceived us;—he who presumes to treat the name of Lady Auberry with disrespect,
has

has forfeited all pretensions to the esteem of Mary Montague.

But hear me, said he, stopping her as she moved towards the door, hear me declare, before you finally banish me your sight, that there is not in the universe another woman for whom I feel such sentiments of filial love, as I feel for Lady Auberry.

She looked at him with an expression of candour and doubt.—If you really did not intend to insult me, said she, explain your motive for that horrible wish you just now suffered to escape you.

I shall do it, replied he, in accents of sadness; but the moment I have done it I know my fate,—I am driven from Riverdale, and see you no more.

Why suppose so dreadful a consequence? it is only the concealment of errors that is reprehensible,—a confession of them is more generally the subject for reward than punishment.

She

She returned to her former place, sat down, and seemed to expect the performance of his promise, whilst he stood before her, with his eyes cast on the ground and his arms folded.

I think, Miss Montague, you must have heard that there is a man in the world who dispossesses you of your natural rights of inheritance?

I suppose you mean the present Lord Auberry;—I have, no doubt, very often heard of him, but never any thing to his disadvantage; on the contrary, I have been told by your uncle, that nobody can be more worthy, few so deserving of esteem;—he has never injured me, I hope he has not offended you,—if he should have been so unfortunate, I am much inclined to become his advocate.

Generous!——he stopped—But these, I presume, are not the sentiments of Lady Auberry?

And why should you presume that these are not her sentiments?—Upon my word,
I do

I do not believe she has any more resentment towards him than I have. If my grand-father and his father entered into engagements that were offensive to any body, could he help it, poor soul, who was not born at the time?

Has Lady Auberry ever, as a proof of her favor, permitted him to visit at Riverdale?

Oh, no! for I never heard he had done her the honour to solicit her acquaintance.

And yet he reveres the character of Lady Auberry, and loves, yet loves to distraction, the beautiful, the amiable Miss Montague.

Well, I am glad, said she, you are able to jest again, though it is at my expence; but does this friend of yours go so much beyond love at first sight, as to love without any sight at all? for I declare to you, upon my honour, I never saw him in my life.

And yet I am so fully confirmed as to the truth of my assertion, that you must allow

allow me to plead his cause as if it were my own.

Any thing that will amuse you is more agreeable to me than the dreadful melancholy that overwhelmed you a few moments ago. I am convinced you only meant to terrify me, and shall never again feel for your imaginary distresses, however well you may support them.

Tears rolled down his face,—he threw himself on the next chair to her, and cried out, in a voice of suffocation,—Mary, divine Mary, I must leave you! though my own soul is not dearer to me than you are!

Good God! she exclaimed, you are as pale as death, and as cold as ice! for he had caught her hands, and pressed them between his own; this surely cannot be acting!

No, no! my misery is no pretence! it is built on the solid basis of reality! I am running headlong to my fate, and there is but one way to prevent my destruction!

One

One way, only one way?—and will not the friendship, the fortune of Lady Auberry conduct you to it? you do not know how dearly she loves you, and how much she would sacrifice to your interest or happiness.

Lady Auberry loves me!—but does not Miss Montague hate me?

If hate and esteem have exactly the same meaning, perhaps I do.

Would you, to save my life, go one step further?

Yes, I would consider you as my relation, as my brother, and say to you, if you wish me happy, be yourself so,—if you desire I should live, you must live also.

And would you, dearest, most ingenuous of your sex, would you be thus gracious, had I been soliciting your compassion for Lord Auberry?—The nephew of Sir William Sage is happily ignorant of your beauty, and your virtues; negative felicity may therefore be his portion,—but after seeing,

seeing, knowing, adoring you, nothing but the possession of your hand at the altar, can rescue Auberry from the extreme of wretchedness ;—see him at your feet, and if you can pity him, extend a finger of mercy, and save, oh ! save him from perdition !

Had Mary hated the man who thus implored her compassion, actuated by the natural benevolence of her disposition, she would have extended her hand to raise him, but not with those emotions of pleasure which peeped timidly from her eyes, and lay concealed under the vivid blushes of modesty, as she held it out to Lord Auberry.

It is now time to tell you what were my thoughts, and what were my determinations, when this *éclaircissement* had fully taken place.

I had entertained suspicions of the fact, before he actually declared himself to be Lord Auberry ; they were awakened by his own confessions, and strengthened by the re-

collection of Sir William's last words, when he said to me, Forgive me hereafter, if you should discover something like duplicity in my conduct;—I was hurt by the imposition, but could feel nothing like resentment for the good man, who, from the best motives in the world, had imposed on my credulity;—I loved Lord Auberry when I supposed him to be the nephew of my old friend, and for Mary's sake, as well as his own, I wished not to dislike him as the son of my enemies;—to gain a conquest over my long established prejudices, was no easy victory; but in the end it was completed, and that alliance which I could never approve, I resolved never to obstruct.

Satisfied with my new plan of accommodation, I attended with much complacency to the further progress of their conversation, which made me understand the whole of Sir William's manœuvring to defeat my caution, and establish his own project.

Lord

Lord Auberry confessed that his guardian's constant praises of Miss Montague first raised his curiosity to be himself the judge if she deserved them;—he often asked why he was not permitted to pay his duty to the Dowager Countess, who had a right to expect all the attentions due from the son of the family, and the representative of her husband? to which he always received the same answer, that I had buried myself in retirement, and he must wait till his visits would not be thought an intrusion; this passed very well whilst he was a boy, but after he grew up to the age of eighteen, and Mary twelve, the evasion lost its force, and he pressed for a more categorical explanation, when Sir William gave him all the satisfaction he required.

The family disagreement, which seemed to oppose his entrance at Riversdale, only whetted his desires to be received and acknowledged by me; but finding it impossible to obtain a regular introduction, he formed various expedients to gain admittance,

mittance, which were regularly counter-acted or frustrated by the vigilance of Sir William, whose scheme was not yet ripe for execution.

In the mean time, eulogiums on my beautiful grand-daughter were every hour sounded in his ears, till his wishes to see her had acquired all the extravagance of passion; it was now that Sir William thought proper to indulge his pupil, and finish his grand plan of operations;—you know under what character he was sent to me, and know how the artifice succeeded.

He owned that the death of his only friend had driven him to a state of desperation, being assured that no other influence would ever prevail over my prejudices.

And now, continued he, most lovely, and most beloved of your sex, now that you have listened to me without abhorrence, complete my happiness, by adding one further proof of generous confidence.

I never

I never promise any thing, said she, smiling, till I know what it is required of me to perform; besides I will hear no more, unless Lady Auberry's commands are in unison with your subject.

Then, replied he, I am a thousand times more miserable than ever!—before I was unhappy without the torment of knowing a better fate; now you have lifted me from earth to Heaven by the sweetness of your condescension, and by this unnecessary reference to Lady Auberry, you again dash me on the pointed rocks of inevitable destruction.

I do not understand this sort of language, my Lord; it may be very fine; but if you mean by it to make me infringe on any of my duties, it will lose its effect;—why do you call a reference to my grandmother unnecessary? can you conceive me so unworthy even of your own esteem, as to take any step of consequence without her approbation?

I conceive you only inferior to angels, replied he, in the most passionate tone, because I know there must one day be a finite end to your existence ; I conceive you in all other respects perfectly divine, and I expect from you the compassion of a divinity ; I expect that you will not force me to an expedient that must eventually produce my ruin ; for I swear, by Heaven and earth, never to drag on my existence, when I am no longer supported by the dear hope of calling you my own.

Perhaps, said she, in a softened voice, I may have mistaken your meaning ; will you, my Lord, have the goodness to remove the error I have fallen into ?

Alas ! my dearest Mary, you are in no error,—I revere, I love, with my whole soul I love Lady Auberry, yet I dare not abide by the consequences of her just displeasure, when told what impositions have been practised by the man who, of all others, is the most hateful to her imagination,

tion, and by whose family she has been injured, highly injured; I dare not ask a reward before I have thought how to deprecate her resentment; it is impossible I should risk all my hopes on a chance so uncertain; let me be still the nephew of Sir William Sage,—Lady Auberry might grant to him that consent she would certainly refuse to me. By my late father's will, I am not of age till twenty-three,—I am not to form matrimonial connections till that period arrives. I am also, by the same authority, condemned to pass the two last years of my minority on the continent; and what do I require of you, Miss Montague, that militates against your duty to Lady Auberry? is there a crime in having those doors open to Frank Sage, which would be barred to the entrance of Auberry?—is it criminal to solicit a promise from you, that I shall find you unmarried when the term of my banishment is expired? or——

Hold, my Lord, said she, with more firmness than languor in her voice, and more of reproach than compliance in her animated countenance,—I have given you a great deal of trouble, and that you may not carry on a chain of arguments, in order to convince me of what I now perfectly comprehend,—I will make my observations on them as briefly as the number of them will admit.—You love, you revere Lady Auberry, and you are not able to abide her displeasure, when she is told of the imposition you are engaged in; if you loved Lady Auberry, whatever was dear to her would be held sacred by you; if you revered her, the want of respect would not be the means of proving your veneration; and whilst you condemn your own duplicity, so far from renouncing it, I am requested to become the partner of your artifice:—you say, Lady Auberry has been injured by your family, and appear to regret the injury; and yet, by endeavouring
to

to slacken the ties which bind me to that dear parent, you meditate a mischief greater than any she has yet to complain of. Indeed, my Lord, there is no sophistry by which I can be persuaded, that accepting your Lordship's propositions would not militate against my duty; therefore you must either permit me to present Lord Auberry to my grand-mother, or never again expect me to sit down at the same table with an impostor.

Cruel, severe, yet ever amiable, ever charming girl! cried he; I am more the captive of your mind than the slave of your beauty;—bring me to the feet of Lady Auberry—I will die, or I will conquer.

There were two doors in the closet to which I had retired, and as he pronounced the last words, I entered from that which opened upon them.

No, said I, you shall not die,—you have already conquered;—I have heard you both with astonishment,—I have pitied

Lord Auberry, but I have gloried in my grand-daughter.

Auberry dropped at my knees,—Mary flew to my arms,—what a scene was here! was I sixty years younger, I would certainly endeavour to describe it.

The title of my true history, *Annals of Love*, is it not a striking one? I am a little vain of my own cleverness;—who could have chose another more applicable, or more to the purpose? but you will not be a proper critic till you have made yourself mistress of the *tout ensemble*.

Before Lord Auberry left England, he was almost resident at Riversdale; and, in any short excursion he was obliged to make from thence, the privilege I allowed him, of holding a literary correspondence with Mary, afforded us perpetual entertainment. I had not granted him this indulgence without limitation, for I reserved to myself the pleasure of sharing it with them; and surely no two young people ever wrote
with

with such energy, ease, and elegance as they did.

The confidence I reposed in Lord Auberry had worn off all apprehensions that he before experienced from my dislike to his family ; he treated me with the affection of a son, consulted me on all his affairs, and my presence lay no restraint on the progress of that passion, the constant expression of which was not more fervent, more energetic, than it was delicate, interesting, and honourable.

The parting of these amiable lovers afflicted me almost as much as it did themselves ; and whilst from Mary's cheeks I wiped away the tears of separation, they fell on my own in abundance.

Such was the Lord Auberry from whom we parted two years ago ; but he lost himself on the continent, and another returns in his stead,—a Lord Auberry who does not visit us, who does not write to us, who does not enquire for us, in short, who does

not know, or wish to know any thing about us.

Perhaps you expect that I am to tell you of some violent disagreement which had preceded the total disunion of lovers so attached to each other; I have no such common event to relate,—my materials are of the marvellous kind. Whilst I am putting them together, I am satisfied with the decrees of Providence, and do not repine that I am unable to penetrate into the mystery of its dispensations.

The last letter Mary received, was from Milan; Lord Auberry had then been absent six months,—it breathed the same tenderness, the same ardency of passion as usual; yet there was a something of constraint and confusion in many passages, that did not escape my observation, though I made it in silence, because I would not be the first to sow the envenomed seeds of suspicion in a bosom where tranquillity and confidence had taken up their abode.

Sixteen

Sixteen months elapsed, and no more letters from Lord Auberry!—Mary pined, she grieved, she was unhappy; I wrote to him once, twice, thrice, but received no answer; I hinted at the inconstancy of the sex, she heard me with gentleness, she tried to smile, but tears rushed to her eyes;—she must have stronger proofs before she could believe him unfaithful; sickness, death, the loss of letters might have occasioned a silence, at present so unaccountable; would I have the goodness to wait the moment of conviction, before I condemned Lord Auberry of neglect or perfidy?

I ask this favour of you, dearest grand-mamma, said my precious child, in justice to Lord Auberry, as well as for the establishment of my own peace; with your consent I promised to be his wife, and if he is not unworthy, I have no right to withdraw my promise; was I to give him up on appearances only, it is possible my life might be embittered with repentance, for having injured him, who is more de-

serving of pity than condemnation ; on the contrary, should he be unfaithful, if he forsakes me, and his silence has its source in neglect, a short time must discover his infidelity, and then you shall have no reason to complain, that in this interval of suspense, I have omitted to learn a lesson of resignation, as well as another, perhaps more difficult, that of eradicating the faint impressions of a misguided fancy.

Here was a wonderful thing indeed, that a venerable personage like me should improve by lessons of wisdom from such a half-blown Rose as Mary Montague ! I can only say with the poet,

“ There is no wonder, or else all is wonder.”

I saw her situation in a new light ; I submitted to her own plan, as wisest, discreetest, best,—and waited with impatience Lord Auberry's return to Britain :—He has been returned eight weeks ; I saw his arrival at that time in one of the public papers,

papers, and I read also that he was presented to the King by the Marquis of Down.

These circumstances I concealed from Mary, and cut out the paragraph which mentioned his name. My reason for this caution you shall know by-and-by. I had not forgotten her just and delicate objections to a premature judgment;—I therefore determined, though my doubts were all at an end, that his faith or his infidelity should be substantiated, before the painful subject was again renewed, for her absolute decision.

Boden, the honest steward, who had married one of my women, lived only twelve miles from Riverdale; I could place unlimited confidence in his diligence and secrecy; I sent him a summons to attend me privately, and he obeyed it early the next morning; by the time he arrived I had prepared the following billet:

To Lord Auberry.

If Lord Auberry has any thing to plead in excuse for a silence of eighteen months, or for the neglect with which he has treated several letters, written by the grandmother of Miss Montague to his Lordship, the doors of her house are still open to receive him; after he has reconciled her to the discrediting certain passed appearances, she will once more present him to her grand-daughter, and give Lord Auberry an opportunity of announcing to her, that he is less criminal than unfortunate.

Boden, said I, you must set off express for London, and deliver this note into the hands of Lord Auberry—you will probably find him at his mother's house, in Hill-street; she, I know, is at Bath; should he be gone there, you must follow him—and
not

not come back till you bring me his answer. Observe his looks, as he opens and reads the note—remember to mark his countenance as much as his words when he speaks to you—but, above all, do not attempt to gain admittance by fending up your name—for if his Lordship knows it is a messenger from me, there are ten chances to one that he will not see you; say, only, that you have business of importance, which you can deliver to no one but himself.

Boden accepted the commission, with all the ardour of a grateful servant, proud to be made of use to his benefactress, and executed it with so much zeal, that I had the pleasure of seeing him return in four days, which was shorter by two, than, from the distance, I had any right to expect. I got him conveyed into my closet, unobserved by Mary, who was walking in the garden, and eagerly asked him, Where were the dispatches he brought from Lord Auberry?

I have

I have none, my Lady.

Then you have not been able to find him?

Yes, my Lady, I have seen his Lordship; but he gave me only a verbal message for your Ladyship—His compliments, was extremely glad to hear your Ladyship was well—that he was, at that time, a little engaged, but would have the honour to answer your Ladyship's letter some other opportunity.

Wretch! said I, softly, as I sickened with indignation—unfeeling wretch! monster of ingratitude! I then commanded Boden to give me a succinct account of their interview.

It was about twelve at noon when I knocked at Mrs. Pleydell's door, in Hill-street; it was opened, after I had waited ten minutes, by a dirty looking housemaid, who grumbled a good deal at being disturbed so early—and said it was a shocking thing for servants to be called up at that time o'-day, who never went to bed
till

till five or six in the morning. I did not think half-a-crown ill bestowed, to stop her complaints, and to get out of her what information I could;—she then asked me very civilly down to the servants' room, where I found every thing in such a stile of confusion, that—your Ladyship will excuse me for the liberty of making remarks in your presence—that convinced me there must be rioting house-keeping, and a young house-keeper.

Go on, good Boden, said I, your observations are so far from being offensive, that you cannot be too minute, for the gratification of my curiosity.

I have next to inform your Ladyship, that I did not see man, woman, or child, cat or dog, from one end of the house to the other, except the young woman I followed to the steward's-room, who gave me to understand, every servant, but herself, was in bed and asleep. I asked if her Lady was in town? No, thank God, she said; but the young Lord was come from

from over the seas, and that was bad enough.

Oh! then Lord Auberry lives here, I suppose?

Why I don't know, Sir, what you would call living—I think the servants live here, as you may see by the glasses and bottles that I have not had time to put away yet; and, to be sure, my Lord lives here too, after a manner—but not like a nobility-man, any more than I am like a nobility-woman;—once or twice a week he dines here, by chance, and has always mutton-chops, so that he helps us no more on in our board-wages than the bare walls; but then his own man and the butler give treats—and then, as I am the only woman servant in the house, and cook their victuals, I come in for my share when they have done; but my Lord never sends a scrap off upon his plate, I warrant you—for, if it be much, or if it be little, he eats it all up. William says, he does believe his Lordship knows no more what he is about, when he

is eating or drinking, than the man in the moon.

Shall I go on, my Lady? said Boden— if I am too bold, and encroach on your Ladyship's patience or time, I can just repeat as much of her speeches as concerns Lord Auberry, and leave out the rest of her nonsense.

Shorten it then, said I, beginning to tire of his descriptive talents, as much you can, without omitting any thing that relates to his Lordship.

I asked what time her Lord would be stirring, as I had some business that required dispatch, and I wished to see him as soon as he could be spoke with. She informed me, Lord Auberry had not been at home for three nights—that he seldom slept in Hill-street, though they were forced to sit up every night expecting him, till six, seven, and sometimes eight o'clock in the morning.

I enquired where, and at what hour, I
might

might be most likely to meet with his Lordship?

She said, the young nobleman was so gay, there was no telling that, because he gave his company to all the ladies in town, and some of them, by the talk of his own man, were married ladies—and very great ladies, into the bargain; but that, if I would stop till two o'clock, his man might be able to tell me where his Lordship was to be heard of; and it would not be long that I should have to wait, because Mr. Handy was always up before any other servant in the house, except herself.

As I had no other method to gain the intelligence I wanted, I thought it best to stay till Mr. Handy made his appearance, by whom I was instructed, that if there was a necessity for my seeing his Lord, I must call, about four, at No. 50, Gerrard-street, Soho; he would try to get me a peep whilst his Lordship was at breakfast.

He

He wanted much to know my name and my business—but I was guarded at all points, according to your Ladyship's directions; so, when he could get nothing out of me, he insisted on my telling him if it was good or bad news I brought his Lord; and on my saying, It was so good that I should expect a handsome reward for bringing it—he said, If I would let him go shares in the profit, he would take care and obtain my admission. Having agreed to the proposal, he went away to dress his Lord; and at four I followed to the house, where he had directed me.

I thought I heard Mary's voice under my window, speaking to her little dog, and hastened Boden to finish as fast as he could, that I might not be surprised before he had done with his extraordinary relation; he therefore informed me, in few words, that being admitted to the presence of Lord Auberry, he found his Lordship at breakfast with a very handsome young lady—that he started, coloured
with

with confusion, on seeming to recollect Boden to be one of my domestics, and trembled exceedingly when he broke the seal of my note. The lady laughed at him—and he believed she was no better than she should be.

Make haste, said I, and once more repeat every word of his Lordship's very singular message to me.

He put your Ladyship's letter into his pocket, and enquired how long it would be before I should return to Riversdale? I answered, Nothing detained me in town, but to receive his commands to your Ladyship. Very well, said he—Give my compliments to Lady Auberry—tell her I am glad to hear she is well—that I am a little engaged now, but will take some other opportunity to answer her letter.

I now heard my grand-daughter's foot on the stairs, and dismissed Boden by the door at which he had entered.

When I related to her the step I had taken, and the consequences attending it,

I forbore

I forbore to say any thing of Lord Auberry's female companion; to crush every latent seed of preference that might have taken root in a heart, gentle, generous, susceptible as Mary's—to smother a passion, so fatal to her repose, was necessary; but to have humbled the dignity of Nature's proudest gift—to have stabbed her delicacy, by saying, The wretch for whom you are forsaken is a prostitute, would have been cruel. There was no need of any other voucher of his unworthiness than the message he had sent to me; and the moment it was repeated to her, he lost her confidence—his idea was discarded—doubt, hope, incertitude, all vanished; her natural vivacity returned; and if ever she had occasion to mention Lord Auberry, his name caused her neither confusion nor hesitation. The conquest she thus gained over a first attachment, was not the work of resentment, or the impulse of a moment; but the effects of a cultivated understanding, and the victory of deliberation.

Having brought my tale to a conclusion,
I shall end with one personal observation,
That though I might have been gratified
by a nearer alliance with Lord Auberry, I
am more than gratified in having escaped
any connexion with his family.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

Mrs. Oxburn, to Sir Ashton Montague.

Jan. 29, 17—.

UPON my word, Montague, I am infinitely indebted to your freedom, for presenting to me, and then leaving on my hands, such a monster of melancholy as Lord Auberry; I command you instantly to come here yourself and take care of him, or else let him go and worry you in the country, for positively his eccentricities are too many and too absurd to entertain me any longer.

I can make him of no possible use to me; he will neither ride, walk, dance, or

shew his handsome person in any public place with me; it was but Tuesday after you was gone out of town, I told him, if he would not go to Lady Elderton's ball, I would never speak to him more as long as I lived; but do you think he would go? not he indeed; and yet he had the effrontery to come in his old lounging way again the next morning, and looked so inimitably careless, that I might have forgiven him if he had taken the pains to ask my pardon; instead of which he drew his chair quite before the fire, and resting his dirty feet on my fine polished fender, took no more notice of me than if I had been his grand-mother;—I believe he did not know that I was in the room, till I told him I hated whistling;—he has still his amiable propensities you may perceive, by his beginning to whistle before he began to speak.

This is not all that I have to complain of: Besides provoking me every moment, his fits of absence have done me a great deal

deal of mischief; he has broken more china than would fit out a shop, and spoiled more gowns than would serve an adventress for a voyage to the East-Indies;—at one of my *petit soupés* after the opera, which I always give when my tyrant is out of town, the careless wretch spilled a tumbler of water over a painted lawn that had cost me fourteen guineas the day before; I reprimanded him, you may be sure, and to make his peace, he followed it with a large glass of wine, which he said would take away the stains;—I screamed out, but it was too late,—Creature, what have you done? water leaves no stain, but if it did, who but yourself would ever have thought of getting it out with port wine?—he begged my pardon, and said he thought the wine had been white.

What is the matter with this man? is he always mad, always intoxicated, or always love-lorn?—there are remedies for most diseases,—the last is at least curable,—it is a pity he should be lost for want of an

able physician;—if you would but once explain how, when, where, and for what he fell into this dolorous disorder, I would set about considering his case, and treat it with so much skill, that I shall give you leave to call me a bungling quack; or force you to confess that I am a perfect mistress in the science of healing;—you know my terms,—no confidence, no cure.

Montague, you are the most incorrigible creature in the world;—did I not shew you, a little while ago, my poor hands and arms covered with blue and black spots, which my merciless tyrant had given me on your account; the wretch not bearing to see me commonly civil to any body but himself? and yet you have introduced to my particular notice this Lord Auberry, who is so much your superior in every thing, that I expect my pinches, scratches, stripes, and lock-up hours will be doubled, in which case I shall hate you both.

My deary has seen your friend so seldom, from the circumstance of his fortunate
detention

detention in the country, that I have hitherto escaped pretty well; but he has so many good-natured friends ready to tell him all my little innocent manœuverings in his absence, that sleeping or waking I am in terrors, and always see his insignificant figure in threatening attitudes, or feel his malignant fingers pinching my poor flesh off my bones.

Mighty comfortable my situation is, to be sure, both foreign and domestic! My father, poor man, fretting himself to a pack-thread, sometimes because he thinks I am not good enough for my husband, and sometimes because he thinks my husband is not good enough for me. My mother, positive, talkative, a wit, and takes upon her to give me instructions of caution which I am not inclined to follow. As for my meek help-mate, I need not describe him;—you know the brute.

These are what you may call the blessings of my fire-side:—then for my worldly connexion,—old cats abuse me, young

prudes shun me, girls who have no lovers envy me, girls who have lovers are afraid of me; ancient gentlemen squall with the cats, sentimental gentlemen grin with the prudes, all fine men admire me at first sight, adore me at the second, are my slaves at the third, but after a three, or at most four months captivity, they throw off their chains with as little ceremony as they put them on;—ask me for one instance, and I will give you a dozen.

To please my mother, I still continue to dangle away some hours every day or every night in Grosvenor-square.

Now, as I have not spared my own relations, you must allow me to abuse yours:—I cannot bear that cousin of yours, that Miss Montague, that Saint Mary, as I call her; what a pity it is she should have cut you out of your family estate! for my part, I doubt whether Colonel Montague is her father, or Lady Mary Pleydell her mother;—my mother knew the late Lord Auberry intimately, and saw him only a few weeks before

before he died, and he had never heard of any such marriage, or any such grand-child; I think it worth your while to make a few enquiries, and not to sit down contented with a cock and bull story told by the doating old dowager.—I should like to see her humbled, I confess; not because all the men are gone mad about her, but because the impertinent minx has taken it into her head that I am not proper company to associate with her purity. She has said this in confidence to some of her friends, who, in confidence, have told me of it again; and if I am not even with her, it will be my misfortune, but it shall not be my fault; I would have her beware, for I can bring half the great world, in such a cause, on my side of the question, by a look, for they are quite as sick of her airs as I am; as to the men, they are all a parcel of fools, or she is a sorceress, and has bewitched them, for, except Lord Auberry, there is not, I am convinced, another man who has beheld her with indifference;—even you

began to feel her spells, and it was to avoid them, I verily believe, that you hurried out of town in so unaccountable a manner, the morning after the Duchefs of Cleveland's last affembly.

I will write no more:—I am out of patience, out of cash, out of humour with every body, and with every thing, except Montague, my mirror, and myself.

CAROLINE OXBURN.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

Lady Jane Petworth, to Lady Auberry.

Jan. 31, 17—

I HAD the honour to inform your Ladyship, by two or three short lines, of my having received your charming letter, and still more charming packet. I have, since that time, heard from my niece Beaulieu, who is transported with her situation at Riversdale, and sends me the most flattering accounts of your health as well as her own*.

I condole with you, my revered friend, on the loss you have sustained in your old

* Both these Letters are omitted.

faithful servant Martin; you must have been unprepared for a summons so sudden, as it seldom happens that Death overtakes by surprise those whom he has been for some time gradually pursuing; and as to the good creature herself, I have no doubt she would rather, had it been in her own election, have died, as she did, under your roof, than have been separated from you, and, after lingering a victim of slow decay, to have yielded up a life dedicated to her venerable benefactress, far removed from the influence of that goodness to which she has been many years indebted for happiness uninterrupted.

Your dear Mary, I know, has written to you on the melancholy subject*. I could not stop her tears, when the intelligence reached her that this tender friend of her infancy was no more; but I changed the source of them, and drew fresh streams from her dove-like eyes, by seizing on that

* Miss Montague did write, but the Letter does not appear.

moment

moment to lift up the veil that hitherto obscured from her sight those domestic misfortunes which involved the fate of her parents, and which the magnanimity of your soul has supported with unprecedented fortitude.

Perhaps you will accuse me of mismanagement, in thinking this a proper time to put in execution the commission you had charged me with ; I have nothing to say in defence of my judgment, but a great deal on the score of opinion ; for, right or wrong, I have always adopted this system of belief, that when a too feeling mind is already softened by the impression of sadness, and there yet remain behind sorrows untold, sorrows which there is a necessity for disclosing, it is the best policy rather to give additional cause for present melancholy, than to wait till the spirits are again invigorated, and more susceptible of adverse attacks. To support my thesis, I make this distinction, that in the first instance, the heart will bend,—in the second,

it

it may break.—So far at least my philosophy succeeds, that I have no more tears to draw from the beautiful eyes of your Mary; and now what are we to expect for this enchanting child but peace, pleasure, happiness,—a path strewn with flowers, and enlivened with uninterrupted sunshine?

I was actually in possession of your Ladyship's commands to disclose this painful secret three days before I could prevail on myself to discompose that sweet serenity, which is the peculiar grace of Miss Montague; but on the third morning, when I received a few lines from your Ladyship's chaplain, to signify the sudden death of Mrs. Martin, and to request I would break the sad event to my dear young charge; I hesitated no longer, and dispatched a note, requesting her presence in Bruton-street;—she came in less than an hour.

That we might not be interrupted by the presence of a third person, I ordered my carriage to be got ready, and desired
Miss

Miss Fortescue would go into the city and make some purchases for me, which I knew must detain her quite as long as it was necessary she should be absent. But, in all my abundant caution, I forgot to be denied, which, on such an occasion as this, though militating against my usual custom, I certainly should have done.

The consequence of my negligence was, that in ten minutes after I had finished all that I had to say, the door suddenly opened, and Mr. Lexington made his appearance.

Miss Montague, whose eyes were still overflowing, sat with a handkerchief thrown over her face, but hearing the sound of his voice, she hastily started up, and, to avoid observation, fled to my dressing-room, but not till he had caught a glance of her person, as well as of her distress.

He threw himself into a chair, and kept his eyes fixed on the door through which she had gone out. I beg your pardon, said he, I fear my visit is unseasonable; I have driven away some lady, who perhaps
had

had a prior demand to my own on your benevolent counsel, though nobody can stand more in need of it than I do.

Be not afraid then to consult me, I replied; the friend you saw with me is so little selfish as to admit many sharers with herself in my esteem and confidence.

Is the face of your friend as beautiful as her figure?

I think so.

Her person struck me as being very like Miss Montague.

I smiled.

My God! I have not been mistaken then; it is her, and she is unhappy; have I not seen her in tears? do I not feel from sympathy that she is miserable?

The sympathy of young men is generally too petulant, too easily alarmed; it has, in this very instance, misled you;—could you expect to find me apparently happy, if she was miserable?

Yet has she not been weeping?—would she see me?—did she not fly from me?—
and

and has not the voice of her distress penetrated my ears, even after she excluded me from her sight? Oh! Lady Jane, in pity tell me, or I shall be destroyed by the violence of my own conjectures.

Your presence, said I, followed, though it did not interrupt, a very interesting recital; her feelings are tender—it affected, perhaps afflicted her, and her spirits were before depressed—for I had been obliged to inform her, that a good woman, whom she tenderly loved, has lately been carried off in an apoplexy; the accounts reached me only to-day, with a request from Lady Auberry that I would break the melancholy event to her grand-daughter.

He listened, whilst I was speaking, with a devouring kind of attention; when, having heard me to an end, he fell into a momentary fit of consideration, started on his feet, took a hasty step across the room, looked out of the window, and returned back again—I would speak, said he, but
I fear

I fear the question I should ask would displease you.

My dear Henry, say what you please, you will not offend me; the privilege of a negative, should it be inconvenient for me to answer your enquiries, is the only power I reserve to myself:

That interesting recital, Lady Jane—I am distracted—was not that interesting recital, which so afflicts Miss Montague, which makes her fly from Lexington, was not the subject of it Lord Auberry?

Confounded at the question, I might have thought his senses deranged, but for the communication your Ladyship had the goodness to make me; and that I had been also instructed by Miss Montague herself with the circumstance of that mysterious affair, some days before I received my intelligence from you.

I assured him the name of Lord Auberry had not passed either her lips or my own, in the conversation alluded to; and asked him

him how such an idea could enter into his imagination?

He caught both my hands—and pressing them, in a transport of joy, cried out, Thank you a thousand, thousand, ten thousand times; I could bear the dislocating tortures of the rack, rather than hear that Miss Montague's tears fell for Auberry.

You surprise, but you do not answer me: Where did you pick up so whimsical a weapon to fight against your own peace with, as that Lord Auberry should be of any consequence whatever to Miss Montague.

I did not pick it up, he replied—it was put into my hand by rumour, and pointed at my peace by credulity; the cursed report reached me many days ago, and gains ground every hour, that the beloved of my soul, the only object of my affections, has been engaged to Auberry; that he is capricious—but that she still retains for him that dear and tender preference which, if I fail to obtain in my own favour, her
image

image shall henceforth be placed at the door of my heart, to bar the entrance against her whole sex. I swear, in the face of Heaven, and before you, that if I am not accepted by——

He would, no doubt, have added Miss Montague, if Miss Montague had not, at that very critical instant, come out of the apartment to which she had retired.

The few minutes passed alone were not misemployed—she seemed to have conquered the violence of her grief; what traces remained on her countenance might more properly be called the calm characters of serious recollection, than the agitated expressions of affliction unsubdued.

I beg your pardon, said she, for running away when you came in, but Lady Jane knows I could not have staid without making a fool of myself. Have you seen the Duchess this morning? It was so early when my dear maternal friend sent for me, that her Grace was not awake at the time I left Grosvenor-square.

I have

I have not seen her to-day, was all he said with his tongue; but his eyes spoke much more—they talked away at a great rate, and threatened to tell all those tender secrets, which, for both their sakes, I have thought it proper he should at present lock up in the recesses of his own heart. Is it not wonderful, that a passion, so ardent as his, should bear controul? Silence, in his situation, must be torture; he sees her every hour; and every hour endears her to his affection. This persevering silence is a strong proof of his superior understanding—a fool would not have submitted to it on any terms.

I have nothing more to relate to your Ladyship in regard to this interview. The Duchess of Cleveland called to take her up in a few minutes after; she joined us, and they went away together, escorted, I think I may say, by the now half-happy Lexington. May I not venture to suppose, he was less miserable when relieved
from

from his jealous apprehensions, that her tears were shed for his rival; and half happy, at the least calculation, when he must discover, that she does not receive his respectful, tender, though silent, assiduities with indifference.

The very first opportunity that offers, and it must be when the Duke is alone, I will sift him hard to find out who is this lady in the clouds, for whom his heir is intended. If our beloved Mary be the person, which, you know, I have for some time suspected to be the case, I may have influence enough to prevail on his Grace to remove the embargo of silence that I have tyrannically imposed on his nephew.

Is it owing to the vanity, or the indiscretion of Lord Auberry, that an affair, which throws a shade, so dark, on his own conduct, is got abroad in the world? The next time I see Henry, I shall certainly ask him, through what channel he got

his extraordinary intelligence? If it were possible to tell this tale to the disadvantage of Miss Montague, so, I believe in my conscience, it would be told. Our variegated circles are formed of young and pretty women, who, I am persuaded, will never be fainted for the charity with which they represent the disappointments of a female, more beautiful, and a thousand times more admired than themselves. Consider me, dearest Lady Auberry, as the adopted mother of your grand-daughter. Though I have no right to share in the glory that will entirely reflect on yourself, for having fashioned a mind, the purity of which has few models, yet, when I see her distinguished by the universality of praise, I must indulge my proud heart in the exulting idea, that I am more interested in her being beloved, respected, and happy, than any other woman in the world, Lady Auberry excepted.

May your days be lengthened, and may you reap the fruits of your solicitude for
this

this dear girl, by seeing her established in all manner of felicity! This is the most ardent wish of

Your Ladyship's affectionately devoted,

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

Miss Pleydell, to Lord Auberry.

Bath, Feb. 2, 17—.

UPON my word, brother, you carry on your affairs with mighty reserve; yet not so privately, but that we get an occasional peep into them. My mother, enraged at the inconsistency of your conduct, is in eternal ill humour with every body about her. I beg you will come and make your own peace, that we may live on more decent terms, or, between you both, I shall be worried to death.

My mother, to be sure, is enough to try the patience of Job; but you are a thousand times more in fault, a thousand times

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more provoking—for shame, Auberry, for shame! we have undoubted information of all your retrograde motions. As to your French women, your gallantries with Lady —, Mrs. Oxburn, or any other beautiful women who may attach themselves to you, neither my mother or I can form any possible objection; but, after you had entirely, as we supposed, broke off the connexion, which made her so miserable, and half killed me with vexation, to hear that you again seek all occasions to throw yourself in the way of our mortal enemy, of running about in the suite of Miss Montague, of feeding her vanity, increasing her triumphs—these are serious complaints—such a specimen of unsteadiness and of disobedience cannot be received tamely. If the charge be untrue, you will certainly either come or write immediately, to confute it. My mother's bilious disorder grows worse and worse; for my part, I am sick of confinement and nursing. If it be not soon over, one way or another, I shall

shall certainly go to town, for a little relaxation—so pray, if you are not too grievously offended with my sisterly freedom, tell the servants to keep my apartment ready. If I did not believe there was some foundation for that vile report about Mary Montague, I would beg your pardon for my angry letter, and subscribe myself

Your affectionate sister,

AGNES PLEYDELL.

LETTER XXI.

Lady Auberry, to Miss Montague.

Riversdale, Feb. 3, 17—.

LATELY, my child, I have been sending thee, through thee channel of kind Lady Jane, food only for melancholy; and shall I not try to make thee smile, when, with regret, I have been forced to make thee weep? You tell me your tears are dried up, your spirits returned, and that your health has not been affected—God be thanked! As a proof of your good spirits, let me soon have another lively journal; to convince me of your good health, tell me you can tire half-a-dozen partners at a ball.

You

You dance like a divinity—Yes, surely, that is the expression; Miss Beaulieu says you dance well—but like a divinity was not the phrase of Miss Beaulieu. Suppose I tell you, that your old grand-mother has received proposals from three youthful candidates, for the honour of her election, would you believe it? Nothing is more true; they are all so powerful, so rich, so gallant, and so much in love, that, unable to decide on the merit of either, their pretensions appearing equally founded, I referred them to you, Mary, because I depend more on your judgment in these affairs than on my own.

It was so long ago I had occasion to answer a tender *billet-deux*, that, for want of practice, I found myself rather puzzled about the matter; but Miss Beaulieu coming to my aid, we laid our heads together, and, between us, produced something, if not very flattering to the hopes of Lord Silvester, Lord Selby, and Commoner Sir James Melvin, at least not extremely cruel.

I thanked each of these lovers for the honour he had done me; and assured them, my hearty acceptance would be of him who should come to me strongly recommended by my grand-daughter, as I could make no choice without her entire approbation.

I trifle with you; but you will never trifle with the affections of any heart, that, in the smallest degree, depends on you for its happiness. By this time, I suppose, these gentlemen know their fate from your own lips; whatever your decision shall be, I am satisfied, though they may probably repine and be dissatisfied.

Ah! my dearest, when I am called upon to render up the account of all my indiscretions, that of making thee mistress of thy choice and actions at seventeen, will not appear in the number of them. Were thy hairs as white as my own, and thy years as many, thou couldst not be more the disciple of wisdom, or a better scholar in the school of propriety.

The

The incomprehensible Lord Auberry is less offensive to me, than the idleness of his pursuits unavoidably makes him a disgrace to that rank he holds in society. I pity, but I do not hate him—on the contrary, should I not acknowledge some obligation, when I feel that I am indebted to him for shewing me the whole extent of your virtues, and in a new point of view, which, I am persuaded, no other man would have taken the pains to set before me at the same price? for who is there, but Lord Auberry, that would build up any woman's reputation at the expence of his own? This has Lord Auberry effectually done; he has added to your sensibility, to your feminine softness, the security of a firm mind, and the grandeur of a decisive principle. The seeds of these excellent advantages were inherent in thy gentle bosom; but never might I have seen them blossom in the frost of disappointment, and bear the fruit of philosophy, had not Lord Auberry, like a diligent gardener, taken

much pains to bring them forward at an early season.

I am charmed with Miss Beaulieu! I am delighted with the letters that have passed between you! I love all young people who are good; but the affection I feel for my own Mary is mixed with so large a portion of pride, resulting from her conduct, that I am in danger of growing a very vain old woman! Nor is it probable I shall correct this sentiment, as long as I can say to myself, Am I not the parent of Mary Montague? Yes, dearest child, I am thy proud, thy exulting, thy happy grand-mother,

M. AUBERRY.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

Lord Auberry, to Sir Ashton Montague.

Feb. 5, 17—.

D—N it! I am drawn into a fine hobble—and you leave me in the midst of it, to scramble out of it as well as I can. My original plan of proceeding would have been infinitely more to the purpose—as, blockhead that I am, for submitting to the amendment of my own bill!

I was going the plain, beaten road of common sense; but you have brought me into a wilderness, a labyrinth of perplexities. I charge thee, spin thy subtle brains to cobweb fineness, till thou hast made a way for me to escape. I must rely on your in-

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ventive

ventive talents, for my own are worn thread-bare.

It was not only my design to throw dust in the eyes of Lady Auberry and her divine grand-daughter; I would have hoodwinked the whole race of man and woman-kind, thyself excepted, until I had worked through all obstacles—until I could have fallen at the feet of my angel Mary, confessed my crimes, removed her doubts, and obtained her pardon.

I call this the beaten road of common sense, from which I made but one deviation, when I spoke to her—when I told her, as she stepped from the carriage, that there was a person who had claims on her heart, which he never would renounce; it was then I steered from the direct path—I saw Miss Montague—I lost sight of reason—my passions took the lead, and they betrayed me.

My error lasted but a moment—Did I very much repent it? No. She once loved me, said I; and now that I have given
her

her reason to suppose she is dearer to me than ever, who knows but, notwithstanding appearances, she will yet cherish me in her affections ?

It was necessary I should again pursue my old system of indifference, of neglect—that, supposing my reform impossible, the case might be given over as hopeless; and that neither she nor her friends would give themselves the trouble to inspect my actions, listen to tales, make enquiries, or think any more about me—the greatest blessing to be desired, in the present untoward state of affairs.

I invited Lady ——— to ride with me in Hyde-park, when I was sure of meeting there the only divinity I worship. I made her keep near the driver, that she might be seen by Miss Montague; I even commanded her notice, by putting my hand to my hat as she passed by in the Duke of Cleveland's carriage; and I did all this with a tortured soul, but, apparently, shewed as little feeling as a butcher evinces

when he knocks down the innocent lamb, whose eyes meet those of his destroyer, fraught with all the pity-moving powers of persuasion.

I do not recapitulate my grand and masterly generalship, when I seduced that villain Boden to carry back such horrible accounts of my wickedness to Lady Auberry, all of my own creating. Why should I repeat what you know already? but you know not the pangs of shame that one particular piece of treachery has cost me. The meanest garb stratagem can put on is the corruption of inferiors, yet it is as necessary to the accomplishment of a deep laid scheme as a firelock in the hand of a soldier on the field of battle.

Were we greater plotters than we are, I would not wish a more able assistant to aid our execution than that plausible, insinuating scoundrel. I have already found him useful in his profession; and he may be made much more so, if, hereafter, we have occasion for him.

I have

I have given you this sketch of the train I was pursuing, when you over-ruled certain *pre-sentiments* that should not have been silenced by the rhetoric of arguments, which had more of flowers than salt in their composition. I was a fool to believe that every puppy who looked at my angel was to be kept at a distance, by your whispering in their ear that she was engaged to Lord Auberry—I have hitherto escaped, skulking in the character of a liar; a vicious one was more eligible, and far more gentleman-like—yet you will drive me, by your unlucky council, to shelter myself at last under the meanest sin in the infernal catalogue.

The report spreads, like fire amongst thorns. If I do not put out the flame with more skill than you lighted it, my own fingers will be d——nably scorched—Are not my difficulties multiplied from one score to one thousand?

Montague, if thou art not callous to the voice of my complaints—if thou art capable

pable of feeling repentance, surely thou wilt feel it when I tell thee to what a state thy unlucky council has reduced me, and that my feigned character of indifference is all blown to the Devil.

Those who, in your great wisdom, you conceived to be the most dangerous of my rivals, were, in my own opinion, the least to be feared. You do not know that discernment, as well as refinement, dwells in the bosom of my Mary—mine she shall be, though Heaven, Earth, Hell, and the Lawyers should unite their forces against me.

The only man of whom I am really afraid is Lexington, and he you have not thought it worth while to put on his guard, because you assure me of his indifference for Miss Montague; and because you know the Duke, from whose decision there is no appeal, had destined him for another lady, long before my Mary had ever been seen by any of the family—if so, what the Devil makes him rivet his eyes on her beautiful countenance,

countenance, as if he was either a painter or a lover?—this does not look much like indifference.

For such mistakes as these, if it be a mistake, that this young man is engaged in another place, remember, Montague, you are answerable; for curse me if I do not hold you accountable for any mischief I may receive from that quarter.

When I consider how my hands are tied up, and that, if I was to see her led to the altar, I dare not draw my sword to lay the wretch, who would tear her from me, dead at my feet, but must hide my head behind fraud and subterfuge—when these reflections cross me, it is then that remorse for my past crimes against the best, the loveliest, the dearest of her sex, is less exquisite than the horrors of anticipation.

Some d——'d tattling gossips or other have been giving information to my mother of all my movements, and I am sure she begins to suspect that I am playing a
double

double game. Before I went abroad, she opposed my engagements to Miss Montague with as much violence, as if I had proposed to connect myself with the lowest order of females; and as long as I remained on the continent, her spies followed me every where.

When I returned, two months ago, she was gone to Bath, in pursuit of health, attended by my crooked-minded sister; I make no apology for the expression;—does she not hate my angel?

I stayed three days to fix the residence of my *chere ami* as far from my mother's as I conveniently could place her, taking up my own temporary abode in Hill-street, and then set out for Bath, where, the very morning after my arrival, I was thunder-struck to hear all my secret transactions proclaimed on the house-top, and all my hidden works of darkness exposed in the broad day of recapitulation.

Montague, I actually, at that moment, did accuse thee of having betrayed me; for,

for, except thyself and one more, there is not another creature who could inform them of my real situation; and, with the most friendly intentions in the world of cutting thy throat, I asked my mother and sister, at the first interval of silence, whether their informer was not Sir Ashton Montague? They made no scruple to clear my doubts, and, no matter how, but I traced out, almost to a certainty, through what channel their intelligence had flowed.

Their inveteracy is of so implacable a nature, and so pointedly directed against the object of my soul's adoption, that, being fully apprised of my calamitous situation, my perilous entanglements, they would, had I not deceived them under the most solemn asseverations, that my former passion was entirely eradicated for the grand-daughter of Lady Auberry,—yes, they would, from mere malice, have opened the mystery of wrongs unutterable, before I had been at liberty to form a plausible, or even possible defence.

Such

Such a step as this would have utterly undone me;—I made concessions the most abject; whether successful or unsuccessful, I swore to renounce all thoughts of Miss Montague, which was the ultimatum of their demands; and, on those terms, I received their voluntary offers of assistance, to extricate me out of my precious difficulties. Already they have been useful to me, particularly amongst the lawyers. I sent off as many papers as, I suppose, will cost me five hundred pounds, by the last mail.

One half of my time is passed in Lincoln's-Inn, and other squares inhabited by gentlemen of the long robe; the remaining moiety is employed in cursing my own villainy, in execrating people and arts, that make me exclaim with agony,

“Once I have ceas'd to love, and once to please.”

If you find any thing objectionable in the subjects of my execrations, I would advise you to pocket the offence, for I am
not

not inclined to brush it out with the sponge of apology. The man who is angry with himself can have no good humour to bestow on his accomplices.

The peace I had patched up with my female relatives is broken by your wisdom; for since the subject of my old attachment has been revived, they begin again to lord it over me. My insolent sister talks of coming to town; she does not say on what errand, but I suspect her diabolical intentions, and had but one way left to purchase their silence a little longer;—it is purchased at the expence of a very condescending answer to her impertinent letter,—a whole sheet of paper filled with oaths that I never made, and vows that I shall never keep.—You have p'unged me into the mud of fallacy; there I am grounded, and there I must stick, until the laws of my country graciously set me afloat, when I shall have no scruples of conscience to prevent me from shewing them how little the
vouchers

vouchers of a lover are to be depended on.

These domestic attacks, though bitter as gall, are less nauseous than other fruits that I am likely to pull from your tree of knowledge; some of them have this very day been forced down my throat.

The devil choak the women, and fly away with the men! I am pestered on all sides, and tell ten thousand lies in twenty-four hours. I have not patience to give thee the particulars now, thou shalt have them when we meet,—the sooner the better.

The poet is a liar who says there is nothing makes such strong alliances as fear;—you and I are bound by a tie infinitely stronger; *we must not cut*, for I cannot do without thee.

Mrs. Oxburn (I thank you for my introduction) does not suit my taste; she is an eternal coquette, whose pleasure is captivation, and whose pain is to see any woman
man

man more admired than herself. My blood boils when she profanes with abuse the name of Miss Montgue.—God made Miss Montague, body and soul; but what malignant fiend was it that moulded the soul of Mrs. Oxburn?—She likes me as little as I like her. At present her whole designs are against the heart of Lexington, and with all mine, I wish her success.

The hint you gave, that you should want to employ her as a tool of mischief, has not been lost upon me; she is in possession of my secret, but never will be of my full confidence; and remember, that it was at your instigation, I may say of your threats to leave me in the lurch, if she was not made one of our associates, that I have so far trusted her. Remember also, that you have guaranteed for her faithful services.

Keep well with her, you say;—be it so;—the guilty, as well as the drowning wretch, will catch at shadows. I expect to be again shipwrecked, by taking you for my pilot;

pilot ; however, you are at the helm, and I must steer by your directions. Miss Montague is your precious freight ;—embarked with her is all my store of happiness ;—whilst I am looking round for the land of liberty, take special care that you do not run her on the shoals of matrimony. I am apprehensive of no danger but losing her ;—manage to avoid that rock, and I will forgive thee if thou shouldst split my little bark, the Hopeful, on any other,—yes, though it should be dashed to atoms, I will forgive thee.

My fortune, my life, my character, if I have any character left, use them all, sacrifice them all to prevent me from beholding my first, my last, would I could say my only love, in the arms of any other husband but the criminal, miserable

AUBERRY.

EDITOR'S

EDITOR'S APOLOGY.

LIBERAL and candid, illiberal and uncandid readers, I present myself before you all, like Shakespere's chorus, to announce that, from the date of the last letter, there is a chasm of twenty-three days in the correspondence between those personages who have the honour to form the *Dramatis Personæ* on my little theatre.

This apparent deficiency is not owing to the indolence of any party concerned, or to my own neglect, but to one of those unlucky accidents which cannot be guarded against, because they overtake us by surprise.

How this small portion of manuscript got out of my hands, it matters not ; perhaps it was lost, perhaps mislaid ; whether one or the other, my memory will so far repair the damage as to give the purport of the letters, though not the letters themselves. It is ~~my intention~~ to extract from the whole, collectively, such a plain but faithful account how affairs were situated, who and who were together, and what they were all about during the lapse of twenty-three days, as may be better adapted to the purpose of information, than to ornament this little work with the flowers of eloquence.

Lord Auberry, in a state hardly short of distraction, was, soon after he sent off his last letter, joined by his friend Montague, who had been on a private visit to Mrs. and Miss Pleydell at Bath. He signifies, when he writes to them on his arrival in town, that every thing goes on to their satisfaction, as well as to his own ; that he is sure Lord Auberry is ready to consent to
any

any thing, if proper obstacles are thrown in his way, and with such he is determined to provide him.

He has also this expression, which I perfectly remember :—" Lord Auberry's passion for Miss Montague is of the same nature with quicksilver, which, though it runs into a thousand directions, loses nothing of its strength, and must at last unite into one body, and return to its first channel, do what you will to separate and disperse it."

There are also missing several letters to and from Riversdale, the contents of which I recollect to be nothing more than what such a young woman as Miss Montague may be supposed to write to such an old woman as Lady Auberry. Hearts that are in unison with theirs, will be able to supply the vacuum with all that is beautiful in the expressions of maternal love and filial tenderness; and as to any other description of females, they will be better

fatisfied with the outlines, than with the picture of these old-fashioned virtues at full length; yet all may be inquisitive to know if there were any little events scattered here and there, which are necessary to the history. Nothing very material, only the dismissal of some other lovers besides the three that are spoken of by Lady Auberry,—that Mr. Lexington seemed to gain more and more on her friendship—that she appeared to have recovered from the melancholy occasioned by the relation of her parents' misfortunes—that her tears had ceased to flow for them, as well as for the death of poor Martin, whom she almost considered in the light of a parent, second only to Lady Auberry herself. She had honoured her memory with a slight mourning, though the putting on black ribbands on such an occasion had drawn down no small degree of reproof from the haughty Dukes of Cleveland, and her Grace's whole train of accommodating intimates.

Lady Elizabeth Jones was astonished that young people should pretend to decide for themselves, when their superiors, in every respect, were willing to give them instructions for their conduct. For her part, if she was the Duchess of Cleveland, she should take the liberty of sending Miss Montague back to her toilet, to look for ornaments better becoming her situation.

Lady Francis Lexington drawled out, My dear child, how can you contend with her Grace?—Lord Francis and I love you as if we were your own father and mother; is it not true, Francy? (appealing to her Lord) and yet I dare say you would not go into mourning for us, if we were to die.

Well, to be sure, that is charming, said Mrs Tovee; and so, Miss Montague, you are determined to put on mourning for your maid? Oh, charming, charming!—did ever any body hear, my Lady Duchess, any thing so ridiculous?

M 2

Miss.

Miss Montague, oppressed by the general attack, was going to retire, when her Grace, to the utter confusion of her numerous supporters, called her back, and seeing her eyes filled with tears, bid her stay where she was. There is no body, said she, taking her by the hand, but myself, who has a right to dictate in my family ;— I am not displeased with your whim, as it proceeds from the goodness of your heart ; and, though I was at first against it, I am now perfectly satisfied.

It is more than I am, muttered Lady Elizabeth.

I recollect no further particulars of this conversation, and shall not make it out by any additions of my own coining.

I wish I could have preserved the letters which passed from Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry, and also one or two written by the same kind friend of my heroine, to her niece Miss Beaulieu : but, alas ! how vain the wish ! they are gone with the rest, and I have only to recall as many of
their

their contents as I am able, for the benefit of my obliging readers.

Lady Jane tells Lady Auberry, that she has had a private audience of the Duke—I went, said she, when I knew your granddaughter would be gone to air with the Duchefs, and that I should find his Grace at home and alone. I met Henry Lexington going in as my carriage stopped at the door; I asked him, when he had assisted me to alight, if he meant to make a long visit to his uncle that morning? he said, No, he only intended to find out what road the ladies had taken, and to go after them as fast as he could; his head ached—he wanted a gallop—but hated either to walk, dance, or ride, except he had something in view better than mere bodily exercise.

Lady Jane told him she knew they were gone to Richmond, and would not advise him to lose time, or he might be too late to escort them back.

He

He examined me, continued Lady Jane, with a great deal of arch penetration, and then asked what my business could possibly be with the Duke, when I was so well informed that neither the Duchess or Miss Montague were at home? I told him, with a very serious countenance, that the occasion of my visit was to consult his Grace on a family affair, as he was always so good as to indulge me with an interview, whenever I wanted his advice.

He shook my hand, as he bade me good bye, and said, If you have a favourable moment, when you could just touch on the affairs of a despairing heart, *remember me*.

I nodded my approbation, and smiled my assent to the prayer of his petition—after which we separated, he for his gallop to Richmond, I for the Duke's closet.

No debtor desires that his creditor should remember what he owes him; no lover desires that his mistress should remember what *he* has forgotten; no fading beauty desires